

AS THE WORLD GROWS INCREASINGLY COSMOPOLITAN:
A COMPARATIVE AND TRANSNATIONAL ANALYSIS OF GENDER AND
MODERNITY IN EAST ASIA AND NORTH AMERICA DURING THE JAZZ AGE.

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Introduction:

“I’m a free-born American, and can show what I please”:

Modern Girl Self-Perception, Public-Opinion, and Politics during the Jazz Age

It was a cooler than usual evening in Somerset, Pennsylvania, on August 24, 1923. There was growing unrest among local parents because they feared that, “bobbed hair, lip-stick” wearing flappers were becoming too influential to the local youth. During a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meeting, tempers began to boil as the parents petitioned the School Board to ban, “silk stockings, short skirts, bobbed hair, and low neck, sleeveless dresses.” The people who stood firmly in opposition to the “Modern Girl” aesthetic and lifestyle were not bashful about their disdain for these youths. The local flappers learned about the meeting and while the meeting was in progress, the flappers “stormed” in and gave a “short and snappy” verbal remonstrance, “delivered in rhyme.” Community members, parents, teachers, and board members looked on as these “New Women” began to chant in unison:

I can show my shoulders
I can show my knees:
I’m a free-born American,
and can show what I please.

After the completion of their rhyme, and the successful disruption of the meeting, the flappers left the chamber room. Following their departure, the local media reported that the “Parent Teachers session was turned into an indignation meeting.” The PTA then voted and “demanded” that the School Board support their position against the flappers.¹ The Parent Teachers Association petition was not unusual, and historians have devoted considerable attention to these kinds of complaints. The responses of flappers, however, require closer attention.

While this small story contains numerous points that could be analyzed, our story will begin with the moment those flappers entered the meeting room. When some local flappers heard about the event, they made the decision to attend. This story shows that flappers were not merely superficial consumers, but actively advancing an agenda. In this instance, the flapper’s actions were overtly political as they were

¹ “Flappers Resent Move for Regulation Dress: Storm Meeting Of Somerset (Pa.) Parents and Teachers and Deliver Ultimatum in Rhyme,” *New York Times*, August 25, 1923; “The Weather,” *New York Times*, August 25, 1923.

active participants. They chose to attend and chant during the meeting. Their clothing demonstrated their freedom of choice as they opted to respond dressed as flappers. Indirectly, it could be argued that the flappers' actions gave the concerned people attending enough ammunition to push back, allowing the people who proposed the ban to shut down the debate.

Frequently, the historiography of flappers looks at the Somerset PTA's actions or other anti-modernist backlashes, dismissing the flapper attendees. Yet, if flappers were merely creatures of frivolity, why did they choose to respond at all? Why did the flappers demonstrate their politics through their choice of clothing and self-fashion? Why was the method of their self-expression important? What was at stake? The flappers' self-fashion and their critics' reactions to that expression exposed the world in which they lived. The story reveals the new zeitgeist and the backlash against a new world where women gained access to power in different spheres. It also demonstrates that in some capacities, such as consumption, flappers could be criticized by what would seem like natural feminist allies, such as advocates of education for women. In addition, this story, and the story of other flappers, challenges some dominant views of consumption and capitalism during the 1920s and even today.

The Modern Girl, while not as overtly political as her New Woman foremothers, sought her own version of emancipation by the blurring of class and gender roles.² This tactic was evident in their consumption of traditionally male products, such as alcohol and tobacco, their use of fashion, which included male attire at times, and their claiming of public spaces, such as jazz clubs and cafes for their own purposes. The flapper sought self-definition and agency through consumption even within the confines of a nearly universal, and global, aesthetic.³ Flappers used cosmetics, fashion, and public displays to create a uniform, one that was so successful that Modern Girls were easy to identify and

² Although in Japan, as Miriam Silverberg has correctly noted, the *Moga* maintained "militancy" due to the rapid rise of a more belligerent nationalism, which viewed the *Moga* as a threat to the traditional role of women as "good wife, wise mother." This created an environment where Modern Girl activism could easily cost them their lives (a prominent example will be noted in Chapter 1). This was not the case in semi-colonial China as the imperialist nations protected the people to a degree within its area of influence to help maintain control. This was also not true in the United States. Although flappers in the United States experienced some opposition from groups like the Klan, this was fundamentally different from governmental suppression. It was also different than the usurpation of Modern Girl characteristics, such as athletics, that were deemed beneficial in Nazi Germany. The most notable example of this trend was the idea that a woman athlete would be a strong mother that produced healthy babies.

³ Joshua Zeitz, *Flapper: A Madcap Story of Sex, Style, Celebrity, and the Women Who Made America Modern* (New York City: Three Rivers Press, 2007), 9, 69, 291.

highly recognizable.⁴ She was also an international figure and the Modern Girl had a variety of names around the world: *moga* in Japan, *kallege ladki* in India, Germany's *neue Frauen*, *garçonne* in France, China's *modeng xiaojie*, *NEPkas* in the Soviet Union, *flapperista* or *la chica moderna* in Latin America, and flappers in Australia, Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom.⁵ This thesis argues that, although most interpretations of the Modern Girl focus on her frivolity, these women expressed a political vision through their consumption, style, and behavior, a vision that contained a cosmopolitan component.

The political aspect of the Modern Girl style contained three interrelated and integral components that built off each other. The first part of this thesis details how the Modern Girl style, contra some interpretations that emphasize its frivolity, contained a political element that was expressed through aesthetics and their lifestyles.⁶ Although in many ways modern girls were social constructs and components of cultural imagination, they were also social and cultural realities who were no less militant than the New Woman in their actual politics.⁷ The Modern Girl style was political in the sense that their consumption had implications for questions of power and gender.

While no less important, the second part of this thesis builds off previous researchers who argue that the Modern Girl as a political aesthetic was global in scope. The Modern Girl was a transnational phenomenon in which influences flowed from both west to east and vice versa. Earlier interpreters, especially in East Asia, depicted Modern Girls and their fashions as a largely thoughtless adoption of Western styles and a product of colonialism. A similar criticism was levied against the American flapper, but was directed against European fashion designers. This thesis stands alongside recent scholarship that sees agency in consumption and sees the Modern Girl actively engaging with internal debates about gender and power in China and Japan. It also tries to expand the argument that there were clear indications of regional adaptations of flapper aesthetic and lifestyles, at least within the East Asian context.

⁴ Alys Eve Weinbaum, Lynn M. Thomas, Priti Ramamurthy, Uta G. Poiger, Madeleine Yue Dong, and Tani E. Barlow. "The Modern Girl as Heuristic Device: Collaboration, Connective Comparison, Multidirectional Citation" in *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization* Alys Eve Weinbaum et al ed. (Durham: NC, Duke University Press, 2008), 1, 11.

⁵ Alys Eve Weinbaum et al., "The Modern Girl as Heuristic Device," 1-2.

⁶ This literature will be explored more fully later in the introduction.

⁷ This would also be true for the earlier New Women.

The final, and maybe most debatable, aspect of the thesis argues that the politics advanced by the Modern Girl had a cosmopolitan or transnational element. This was particularly true in the U.S. where it challenged the nativism that intensified during the 1920s and was largely missed in older scholarship on the American flapper. The Modern Girl challenge to ethnocentrism was evident in other areas of the world, especially in Japan and Germany, where hyper-nationalism assimilated certain aspects of the Modern Girl, while actively fighting other aspects. This tension can be seen in the promotion of athletic women, something tied to the Modern Girl aesthetic, while trying to limit female autonomy and political activism. Flapper's interest in international, or alien culture, as well as actively seeking it out at times was a sign of "actually existing cosmopolitanism" —the idea that cosmopolitanism does not require total abandonment of national culture and identity.⁸ This key element of the Modern Girl was frequently overlooked, and was true to modern girls everywhere. Whether in the countries, regions and cities outlined in this thesis, or in India, Berlin, London, and Latin America, there was a desire to be viewed as worldly, a truly modern cosmopolitan. Modern Girls portraying themselves as cosmopolitan was a striking and controversial political statement, in and of itself, during a time of virulent hyper-nationalism.

Methodological Approach

This thesis will argue for the political dimensions of the Modern Girl aesthetic by exploring depictions of flappers and other modern girls in both the United States and East Asia, analyzing them through three differing, but often recurring themes autonomy, the use of physicality, often in public spaces, and identity, including national, regional, and subcultural identities. Within the U.S. there were debates over the flapper aesthetic as an art form as well as its political nature. Each of the themes above has overt and covert political ramifications for the Modern Girl in their historical settings. While still a contentious issue in the U.S. during the Jazz Age, physicality and public spaces in general was less provocative as the New Woman fought for these rights for over a half-century. The thesis analyzes publications that represented themselves as the voice of the Modern Girl or expressed sympathy for them. In doing so, it

⁸ This concept, coined by Bruce Robbins in the introduction to his edited volume *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation* (1998) and will be explained in greater detail later in the introduction.

gives the Modern Girl or her self-appointed spokespersons a voice in the cultural debates about their character and identity, an element missing in much of the research on this topic. This thesis also seeks outside primary sources that confirm or dispute the claims of Modern Girl publications.

Women's newly found freedom after the war proved to be a double-edged sword. While the Modern Girl's new lifestyles were a clear and visible mark of freedom and emancipation, it also opened women up to exploitation. While there was a great amount of overlap between autonomy and the Modern Girl identity as one cannot exist without the other, they were deservedly separated due to how they were used by the Modern Girl herself and by others in defining her as a modern phenomenon.⁹ The thesis will then consider the transnational character of the Modern Girl by examining East Asian literature, with the aim of demonstrating that the questions of gender and consumption that defined the archetypal "new woman" of the 1920s transcended national borders. Ultimately, it demonstrates that at least some modern girls within these nations actively shaped their own image, and were far from the passive, apolitical figures described by their critics, and even by some scholars.

Literature Review

Numerous works have been published in recent years regarding various aspects of the Modern Girl. Earlier works concerning the Modern Girl, especially in textbook surveys, were critical and often viewed her as a symbol of the vacuity of the 1920s. In *Captains of Consciousness*, Stuart Ewen argued that advertisers and cultural producers assailed family life, gender relations, work habits, and fine art in an effort to sell their largely unneeded commercial products. Ewen then argued that most women consumers, not only the Modern Girl, but every woman who used technology to enhance productivity to increase leisure time were "merely a cog in a vastly corporatized process of production" and that "woman's second-

⁹ In this thesis, autonomy refers to the ability of a competent individual to make relatively rationed, informed, and un-coerced decisions. Essentially, autonomy consists of the attributes that make an individual a free acting social agent. Relatedly, agency refers to the ability of a capable free acting social agent to operate by their own volition. Identity reflects the qualities, beliefs, personality, and lifestyles of the individual (self-identity) or a group (cultural identity). Therefore identity refers to core characteristics of both individuals and groups.

level decision-making capacity was only a euphemism for decisions made on the corporate level.”¹⁰ More recent scholarship, however, has sought to demonstrate the agency of modern girls, while also exploring how societal changes influenced them and their behavior. One of the earliest examples of this trend was *Hope in a Jar* by Kathy Peiss. According to Peiss, women obtained gratification, self-definition, and agency through the use of fashion and makeup and that it served as “a common language of self-expression and self-understanding.”¹¹ In *Flapper*, Joshua Zeitz argued that flappers fit this pattern by living a modern “controversial lifestyle in a spirited attempt at self-definition” and asserting “their right to make personal choices.”¹² These authors do not deny that the fashion industry, advertising, and mass media affected women’s consumption, but they argue that beauty culture and the women who partook in it were far more complicated and nuanced than top-down manipulation suggests.

Newer research tends to view the Modern Girl through a more transnational perspective. Older scholars of international modern girls, especially in the Far East, typically looked at the Modern Girl as simple consumers, but with colonial influences. A prominent example of this argument would be Sarah Stevens, who argued that the Chinese Modern Girl’s use of English represents colonial influences while also stressing its “cosmopolitan nature.” Stevens then argued that English “served as an immediate visual marker of a text’s connection to modernity.”¹³ Christopher Rosenmeier noted this trend in Shanghai author Shi Zhecun’s short stories, which illustrated the changing perception of the Chinese New Women as a “symbol of female emancipation” and how the Modern Girl became “a popular icon of glamour and leisure,” and thus “competing visions of modernity.”¹⁴

¹⁰ Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 165, 171. Ewen in later works has argued that the advertising campaigns of Lucky Strike cigarettes were largely responsible for women’s consumption of tobacco during the Jazz Age. See Stuart Ewen, *PR!: A Social History of Spin* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 169-171. It should be noted that the works of F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway have women smoking several years before advertisers targeted women as cigarette consumers. Fitzgerald in particular has flappers smoking in the short story “The Ice Palace” and *The Great Gatsby*. See F. Scott Fitzgerald, “The Ice Palace” in *Fitzgerald: Novels and Stories 1920-1922* edited by Jackson R. Bryer (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 2000), 293-294, 300; or F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (New York: Collier Books, 1925), 119, 126.

¹¹ Kathy Peiss, *Hope in a Jar: The Making of America’s Beauty Culture* (New York: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 201-202.

¹² Zeitz, *Flapper*, 9, 69, 291.

¹³ Sarah E. Stevens, “Figuring Modernity: The New Woman and the Modern Girl in Republican China,” *NWSA Journal* 15 no. 3 (Fall 2003): 84-85.

¹⁴ Christopher Rosenmeier, “Women Stereotypes in Shi Zhecun’s Short Stories,” *Modern China* 37 no. 1 (January 2011): 48, 65.

Some scholars interpreted the consumption of the Modern Girl as a means of promoting agency or as a form of gender-based rebellion. Ageeth Sluis contended that although this “incipient form of transnational gendered capitalism” was not “empowering in a feminist sense, the world of leisure and shopping did provide working-class women with a sense of mobility, freedom, and female sociability.”¹⁵ Liz Conor argued from a similar perspective. To become modern, Conor identified three factors that were essential for the Modern Girl: the conditions of visibility, the expanding range of representations, and how these representations impacted feminine subjectivities. Conor’s first two factors were intrinsically and inseparably tied together. The first deals with the ways in which technology was utilized to display modern women, while the second factor dealt with the expanding range of representation due to the technological boom. Technology played a key role in the development of the conditions of visibility, such as photography, cinematography, and other forms of mass media. According to Conor, this advancement gave rise to both the pin-up model and the movie starlet. Conor’s third factor, was what she described as “modernity’s visions of women” becoming a “part of women’s self-perception as modern.” This ultimately forced new “gendered perceptions [to] become embodied.” Conor went on to assert that the “feminization of youth culture probably gave younger women a greater sense of cultural inclusion and presence.” Conor concluded that this process gave flappers the mobility needed to be both a part of society, and to be viewed apart from older views of society. It was by this pronounced mobility and visibility that flappers increased their agency. Although the cult of youth preceded the 1920s, it was now a “spectacle” and those who scrutinized it “only served to intensify women’s exposure and eroticism.”¹⁶

Several contemporary scholars look at the Modern Girl as a transnational phenomenon, but one that contained strong elements of the native culture while maintaining a large degree of agency. The Modern Girl Around the World Research Group, based in Washington University, argued that the “near simultaneous appearances of Modern Girls around the world complicates widely accepted histories of

¹⁵ Ageeth Sluis, “Bataclanismo! Or, How Female Deco Bodies Transformed Postrevolutionary Mexico City” *The Americas* 66 no. 4 (April 2010): 481.

¹⁶ Liz Conor, *The Spectacular Modern Woman: Feminine Visibility in the 1920s* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 7-8, 226, 231.

commercial capitalism, consumption, and visual culture.” It also obfuscates the assumption of a very “lineal dissemination of ‘modernity’” from Western societies.¹⁷ They further contended that the “modernity” of the Modern Girl should not be viewed from a negative or positive aspect of commodity culture, but presented the Modern Girl as self-empowered social actors who had agency.¹⁸ The research produced by these groups was influential to this thesis and it is designed to build off this base.

The idea that self-identity serves as a form of empowerment also echoes Michel Foucault’s notions of the “technologies of the self.” While the theory is not without its flaws, “technologies of the self” functions as a logical and reasonable lens through which one can investigate the flapper aesthetic and lifestyle while maintaining the idea that people are at least partially autonomous. Foucault defined, “technologies of the self,” as those that, “permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.”¹⁹ This is helpful as an analytical tool because it maintains the agency that is apparent in the Modern Girl’s attempt to self-define. It also gives analytical room for certain members of the capitalist elite who sought to manipulate and control women’s consumption through advertisements and other mass media portrayals.

Primary Source Evidence

For this project, primary source documentation for the American experience of flappers is from magazines, the *New York Times* and the *Chicago Tribune*, since part of the focus of the piece is the representation of the Modern Girl. These various depictions will be juxtaposed against articles and statements by flappers about how they view themselves, taken predominately from *The Flapper* and its successor magazine *The Flapper Experience*, a fashion magazine based out of Chicago. This mixture of images and written accounts from different periodicals are insightful as they advocate and give the Modern

¹⁷ Alys Eve Weinbaum et al. “The Modern Girl as Heuristic Device,” 3, 12-13.

¹⁸ Alys Eve Weinbaum et al. “The Modern Girl as Heuristic Device,” 4, 20-22.

¹⁹ Michel Foucault, “Technologies of the Self” in *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, ed. Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick Hutton (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 18.

Girl a voice in the dialogue. These magazines contained both overt and covert political agendas, which gives a largely unexplored primary source to support scholars like Peiss and Zeitz, or the Modern Girl Research Group in their beliefs concerning the Modern Girl and agency. Such a focus helps distinguish this project from other works that investigate the Modern Girl, but still allows it to fit within the existing literature that examines and marries research on the Jazz Age and fin de siècle women, urbanization, consumption, and modernity.

Further tying this work into the contemporary literature would be the exploration of the Modern Girl using a comparative and transnational perspective. The primary documentation used for East Asia will be the Shanghai magazine *Ling Long* and Republican Chinese authors such as Ailing Zhang, Shi Zhecun, and Lu Hsun (Lu Xun), as well as interwar Japanese author Junichiro Tanizaki. The work of these authors and the output of the magazine *Ling Long* illustrated both the interconnected and transnational character of the Modern Girl as well as each individual manifestation (the comparative aspect) of the Modern Girl that developed in a world that was becoming increasingly modern. The examination of these primary sources will further allow the project to contribute to the larger body of research concerning the Modern Girl as they are sometimes overlooked by historians that focus on images of the Modern Girl, or strictly her consumption of material goods.²⁰

So Why Comparative, Transnational, and Cosmopolitan?

So the question remains, what warrants a comparative and transnational study of the Modern Girl? Japanese author Junichiro Tanizaki may say it best as he opens his book on the Japanese *moga*, *Naomi*, with the phrase “as Japan grows increasingly cosmopolitan...” This statement was one of global scope and perspective, but one that was almost understated. Japan was growing more cosmopolitan, but other countries during this time were also growing into modern nations with large cosmopolitan areas. This would include, but was not limited to, China and the United States. Each of these countries was

²⁰ Additionally, most claims by these periodicals were substantiated by other periodicals or serials like the *New York Times*. So although this approach cannot completely verify to what degree that everyday flappers believed in their arguments, it does demonstrate that similar views were prevalent. Due to its widespread beliefs, it gives this form of analysis more credence in trying to discern the voice of the flapper.

leaping into modernity and shared some things in common, but they also differed significantly. China and Japan for example, had cultures lasting for centuries, while the U.S. was a relatively new nation, yet still indebted to its Western European heritage. These nations, however, were becoming modern nations that contained new cosmopolitan values and foreign cultures. There were also debates about what it meant to be a modern nation, as well as what it means to be a citizen of that nation started to become contested. Sometimes reluctantly and sometimes deliberately, many of these nations looked to each other to help answer these questions, i.e. there was a dialogue.²¹

These three nations were embarking on modernity, nearly, but not quite, at the same trajectory. Modernity as a historical category refers to a period of widespread skepticism, including the questioning or rejection of tradition; a focus on individualism, freedom, and equality, both de jure and de facto; rationalization and professionalization; a movement away from agrarianism and feudalism toward capitalism and consumption; and the rise of industrialization, urbanization, cosmopolitanism, and nationalism.²² Given the multiple facets of modernity, some scholars argue that there is more than one possible path to modernity. It is important to recognize that these technologies involved more than just

²¹ Although not covered in this study, the Soviet NEPkas experience was also very unique and fits the models described in this section. According to Anne Gorsuch, since the New Economic Policy (NEP, 1921-1928) was “a period of relative cultural and economic relaxation, global cultural information about ‘modern’ dress and behavior crossed even the formidable borders of the new Soviet Union” (Gorsuch, 175). This environment produced “young lovers of fashion” who were “sometimes called ‘NEPkas’ (NEP girls), a term which emphasized their connection to the economic extravagances and ‘decadent’ Western-influenced cultures of NEP” (Gorsuch, 175). Gorsuch continued by saying that the Soviet Modern Girl’s consumption “remained different from those in capitalist countries.” This was because in other countries “advertisements were key sources of transnational ideologies of gender and consumption, in Soviet Russia most advertising in the 1920s were deployed as a political tool to sell state-approved or state sponsored goods” (Gorsuch, 177-178). During the NEP era, the Soviet Union became enthralled by how quickly the U.S. developed industry and therefore promoted American technology, culture, and engineering in an effort to expedite the growth of Soviet industries. This development also allowed the Soviet Modern Girl to emerge in society, although “Soviet fashion magazines were a few years behind their Western counterparts” (179, 185). Obviously, the Soviet intelligentsia that opposed the NEP also opposed the NEPkas, but there were also other critics such as Alexandria Kollontai, who felt that NEPkas undermined the egalitarian gender component of communism because these women were reverting to the dependent “female of the prerevolutionary period” (187). The unique promotion by political leaders, and rejection by others, coupled with the promotion of American ideas of capitalism and consumerism, makes the study of the Soviet NEPkas a fascinating and distinctive case study of the Modern Girl and transnational consumption. See Anne Gorsuch, “The Dance Class or the Working Class: The Soviet Modern Girl,” in *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization*, ed. Alys Eve Weinbaum et al, 174-193 (Durham: NC, Duke University Press, 2008). Other relevant works include Anne Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary Russia: Enthusiasts, Bohemians, and Delinquents* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000) and Sheila Fitzpatrick and Yuri Slezkine ed., *In the Shadow of Revolution: Life Stories of Russian Women from 1917 to the Second World War* (Princeton University Press, 2000).

²² Richard Leppert, “The Social Discipline of Listening” in *Aural Cultures*, ed. by Jim Drobnick (Toronto: YYZ Books, 2006):19. Michel Foucault would also add the introduction of state-sponsored mass surveillance. However, it could be argued that this development was a natural conclusion of scientific advancement. Essentially, governments would have always spied on its citizens, if they had the technological capability. See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York and Toronto: Vintage Books, 1995), 170–77.

industrial production, but also included a marked fixation with evidence, visual culture, and personal visibility. One of the most recurring themes while discussing modernity is increased visibility, and women in the public sphere were an integral part of it.

Something often neglected from definitions of modernity is the inclusion and development of a global mindset. This includes the ability for the nation-state and its people to know their place in the world and to know their role within the larger reality. This often comes with tension as people seek this new reality through lens, prejudices, and worldviews that may no longer be adequate to explain the new reality. This is the main reason why a transnational analysis is a beneficial approach to understanding the contemporary world, and how the modern world was birthed by the Modern Girl and their use of mass consumption and leisure activities.

The above notion of modernity relates back to the previously mentioned “actually existing cosmopolitanisms.” In *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation*, Bruce Robbins coined this phrase to distinguish then contemporary views of cosmopolitanism with its use in Enlightenment discourses. This gives the term a meaning more akin to modern scholars’ bottom-down approach, as opposed to an imposed top-down definition. This allows cosmopolitanism to include “transnational experiences that are particular rather than universal and that are unprivileged –indeed, often coerced.”²³ In terms of the 1920s U.S. experience, it would include the traveling to Harlem and participating in the cultures they were experiencing. It would also include cities like Chicago that had sizeable immigrant and ethnic enclaves. It is noteworthy that within this context, they would all be U.S. citizens, but the intermingling, co-opting, and adopting of certain amount of the various cultures still took place. Moreover, this appropriating of culture need not be exploitive, although there were several instances that would be unquestionable. Historians have not been neglectful of the topic and that it was an issue during the 1920s. Historian William Leuchtenburg briefly noted that part of the nativism in the 1920s was a result of “enclaves of the foreign-born, not yet adapted to American ways” and “new intellectual currents

²³ Bruce Robbins, Introduction to *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation* ed. Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 1.

of...cosmopolitanism.”²⁴ Anti-cosmopolitans, like the Klan, reviled these developments, and blamed it for the degeneration of society, because they felt that the cosmopolitan urban lifestyle was anti-American. To these people, the flapper was a model of degeneration and cosmopolitanism, and they hated it.

The international cosmopolitanism that made up a part of the Modern Girl lifestyle is reminiscent of Benedict Anderson’s belief that a nation is “an imagined political community” because “members ...will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.”²⁵ This also applies to an “imagined cultural community” of flappers and other modern girls throughout the world. In many ways, Anderson’s argument is more effective in understanding worldwide subcultures during the time of mass media where divergent groups can maintain contact with one another far easier than ever before. The idea of cosmopolitanism, a worldwide imagined community, and the belief that the Modern Girl aesthetic contained agency, gave the Modern Girl a unique identity, and one with an international component.

²⁴ William Leuchtenburg, *The Perils of Prosperity, 1914-1932* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 204.

²⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 4.

Chapter 1:

“In the beginning, woman was the sun, an authentic person.”

Understanding the Socio-political and Cultural Environment

Concerning Women in East Asia and the U.S.

To understand the Modern Girl, it is important to understand the socio-political and cultural realities in which she moved and operated. This chapter will look at women's rights and certain feminist activists in China, Japan, and the United States. The relatively concurrent appearance of the New Woman and the Modern Girl lend themselves to a more global study than other subjects, permitting the historian to gain a greater perspective, both national and international, of the time and regions in which they lived. Consequently, this chapter will briefly explore the events in these nations that forged the political milieu of the interwar period. In this manner, this section is vital to understanding the political component of the Modern Girl aesthetic.

All of the modern girls, in their respected nations, had things similar and dissimilar to their international counterparts. In other words, the Modern Girl aesthetic contained political implications that extended across national boundaries, but this political nature contained antecedents that contain unique variations due to their own peculiar historical context. In several ways, the Modern Girl and the New Woman shared several concerns and political climates. In addition, the socio-political environment was just as nearly dangerous for each, but for different reasons. Therefore this chapter will seek to contextualize the Modern Girl by examining her antecedents and women's rights in general, in each country.

A Brief Introduction of Women's Rights in North America

The United States has had a long and storied tradition of people seeking rights for women, but the push for women's rights only became widespread after the U.S. Civil War (1861-1865). Three distinctive, yet sometimes overlapping, groups fought for civil rights during Reconstruction (1865-1877): clubwomen, suffragists, and the New Woman. These groups rapidly expanded during the Populist and Progressive Era. Each fought for rights in differing manners: suffragists sought the right to vote,

clubwomen desired to change the meaning of the term “political” to include items that were not at one time thought of as being part of the domestic sphere, and the New Women in general argued for a more egalitarian society. All of these groups contributed to the outlook and political nature of the American flapper, especially as these groups evolved over time.

The campaign for suffrage, although started before the war, gained momentum during the Constitutional debates that occurred during Reconstruction. Universal suffrage was advocated early on during the debates and was initially led by such luminaries as Lucretia Mott, Lucy Stone, Susan B. Anthony Elizabeth, Cady Stanton, and Frederick Douglass. However, several prominent Radical Reconstructionists such as newspaper magnate and future presidential hopeful Horace Greeley argued that it was “the negro's hour” and that women’s “first duty now” was “to go through the State and plead his claims.”¹ This eventually led to formation of two competing organizations. One that believed it was acceptable for Black males to be granted suffrage first, if it was quickly followed by universal suffrage. The other advocated for strict universal suffrage and the separation, both financially and structurally, from the abolitionist movement.

Although working independently from each other, members from each group tried to force the legal system to acknowledge that women had the right to vote. Most notably Susan B. Anthony, but several others as well, tried to vote in an effort to provoke a lawsuit and a hearing before the U.S. Supreme Court. Eventually, they were able to get a case before the Supreme Court in 1875, but the court ruled against them. This forced these groups to work toward a Constitutional Amendment, but also to fight incrementally in a state-by-state basis. They had a great amount of success, especially in the West, and this helped inspire the two organizations to merge into the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) in 1890.² Shortly afterward, several male progressive reformers endorsed NAWSA, believing that they could be key allies in achieving several of their goals, such as ending

¹ Horace Greeley, *The Selected Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony: Against an Aristocracy of Sex, 1866 to 1873* vol. 2 ed. Ann D. Gordon (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 270.

² Ellen Carol DuBois ed., *The Elizabeth Cady Stanton–Susan B. Anthony Reader* (Boston: Northwestern University Press, 1992), 178–180; Sally Gregory McMillen, *Seneca Falls and the Origins of the Women's Rights Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 228-231.

political corruption and establishing labor rights such as child labor laws. This coalition culminated in 1912 when Theodore Roosevelt's Progressive Party officially endorsed women's suffrage.³

Even with the budding support for NAWSA, the organization seemed too ineffectual and slow for some members. In 1913, Alice Paul, who worked with and was influenced by the more militant British suffragists, orchestrated a suffrage parade the day before Woodrow Wilson's inauguration. During the parade, the marchers were attacked by a crowd with some reports that the police participated in the assault. Starting in 1916, Paul founded the National Woman's Party (NWP), which during WWI, Paul and about 200 NWP supporters picketed the White House. The Silent Sentinels, as the protesters were called, carried inflammatory signs referring to President Wilson as "Kaiser Wilson" and making statements like: "Mr. President, how long must women wait for liberty?" Several of these women were imprisoned, beaten, and after starting a hunger strike, they were forced fed, which caused numerous health problems. Meanwhile, Carrie Chapman Catt, the new leader of the NAWSA, building off the publicity and sympathy garnered towards suffrage due to the plight of the Silent Sentinels, positioned NAWSA to help make the final push towards the passing of the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.⁴ The continued existence of these advocacy groups into the 1920s influenced some proponents of the flapper lifestyle.

Distinctively separate from both the New Woman and the suffragists, but no less important, were the clubwomen. In the beginning, these clubs focused on studying literature or activities that promoted self-improvement. These women often refused to be called suffragists, but their interest in social reform were far from apolitical. Within a short period of time, several of these clubwomen started to argue that such things as clean cities, water, and food, child education, legal reform and anti-corruption laws were irrevocably linked to the domestic sphere and therefore women were uniquely qualified to address these issues. For example, Jewish-American clubwoman Marion Misch argued for a new American utopia built on the equality of sex, social status, and children's rights. "I see America as one great patriotic family...I see...adequate schools...I see orphans no longer in rule-ridden institutions, but in cottages...which make

³ Anne Firor Scott and Andrew MacKay Scott, *One Half the People: The Fight for Woman Suffrage* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 28-29; Sara Hunter Graham, *Woman Suffrage and the New Democracy* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1996), 57, 112-13.

⁴ Passed on August 26, 1920, the amendment states, "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex."

the normal home.”⁵ Often they were successful in reevaluating what it meant for women to participate in public spaces and politics, which resulted in them becoming embroiled in reform activities.⁶ In this manner, although not as overtly political as the suffragists during this time, clubwomen still promoted autonomy, and thus allowed for their children to be more open minded towards more explicit women’s political activities as it was not far removed from the undertakings that they witnessed from their mothers.⁷

Clubwomen’s more subdued political nature contained two relevant elements related to the Modern Girl. Due to their localized nature, clubs were more likely to have minority participants, and their covert politics were similar to those outlined in *The Flapper*. Sometimes clubs were integrated but more frequently, they contained a racial component. The Douglass Center Women’s Club, for instance, co-founded by African-American anti-lynching activist Ida B. Wells-Barnett and white minister Celia Parker Woolley in Chicago was an integrated club.⁸ However, in Boston the New Era Club received admission into the General Federation of Women’s Clubs (GFWC), but it was quickly rescinded when the Federation leadership realized it was an African-American women’s club.⁹ Margaret Murray-Washington, clearly influenced by her husband Booker T. Washington’s belief that education was the key to equality, argued that African American women, regardless of class or region, “must be one united whole in this great uplifting of our women.” She goes on to say that under slavery, Black women were never given “a single idea of the beauty of home life, a single idea of the responsibility of womanhood, wifehood, or citizenship.”¹⁰

At the same time, some American Indian clubwomen claimed, with the assistance of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, that the clubwomen’s “greatest work” was “in elevating her own people.”¹¹ Both Washington and the women from the Carlisle school felt that lack of proper socialization resulting from

⁵ Mrs. Caesar Misch [Marion Misch], “The New America, The Jewish American Woman: A Symposium,” in *The American New Woman Revisited, A Reader, 1894-1930*, ed. Martha Patterson (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 220.

⁶ Maureen Flanagan, *Seeing With Their Hearts: Chicago Women and the Vision of the Good City, 1871-1933* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002), 8, 57-60.

⁷ Karen J. Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868- 1914* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1980), 1.

⁸ Flanagan, *Seeing With Their Hearts*, 167-169.

⁹ Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist*, 108-109.

¹⁰ Mrs. Booker T. Washington [Margaret Murray-Washington], “New Negro Woman,” in *The American New Woman Revisited, A Reader, 1894-1930*, ed. Martha Patterson (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers UP, 2008) 55-56.

¹¹ “The Modern Indian Girl,” in *The American New Woman Revisited, A Reader, 1894-1930*, ed. Martha Patterson (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers UP, 2008), 175.

slavery for Blacks, and “primitivism” for the natives, required proper education for these women to learn how to correctly care for their home, children, husbands, and ultimately themselves. Related to the occurrences at the Carlisle School were the attempts of the GFWC to promote nativist activities such as free concerts in ethnic enclaves.¹² Additional positive interactions occurred during the violent suppression of women strikers in 1915. During the strike in Chicago, several women’s clubs joined forces with the Immigrants’ Protective League to testify against the police.¹³ This shows that shared opposition, as opposed to unity, was multifaceted, and that political strategy can trump race and ethnicity. It should be noted, however, that the double burden of race and gender was hard to rise above, that working together for women’s rights for everyone, was too much to overcome by most of these women.

Suffragists were not alone in trying to use the zeitgeist of change that was common during the era; the New Woman also sought to change their societal positions. Starting during the *fin de siècle*, but with prominent examples stretching back to the at least the mid-1870s, women around the world fought for equality. The growth and collapse of world empires and the rise of nationalism, as well as labor and civil unrest, allowed these women to contest established societal and gender norms. The phrase “New Woman” was created by Irish women’s activist and writer Sarah Grand in the article “New Aspect of the Woman Question” (1894). In this piece, Grand argued that society was constructed by men without the consideration of women.¹⁴ Grand then claimed that women, as inquisitive creatures, sought to understand knowledge and society, while challenging established gender roles because she seeks to understand all the details of life.¹⁵ French-British novelist Ouida quickly responded to Grand’s article, arguing that women in “public life would exaggerate the failings of men, and would not have even their few excellencies.”¹⁶ As these debates took place in the Boston-based literary journal, *North American Review*, they were extremely influential in the United States. The expression “New Woman” quickly became shorthand, and

¹² Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist*, 58, 110.

¹³ Flanagan, *Seeing With Their Hearts*, 138.

¹⁴ Sarah Grand, “New Aspect of the Woman Question,” in *The American New Woman Revisited, A Reader, 1894-1930*, ed. Martha Patterson (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 31.

¹⁵ Grand, “New Aspect of the Woman Question,” 35.

¹⁶ Ouida (née Marie Louise de La Ramée), “The New Woman,” in *The American New Woman Revisited, A Reader, 1894-1930*, ed. Martha Patterson (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 38.

sometimes a pejorative categorization, for women who did not follow conventional gender roles. Even women who just wanted to be able to perform public activities were labeled New Woman.

The New Woman was a diverse group. Some women were suffragists; others were women who desired to obtain licensure for professionalized vocations such as doctors, lawyers, and social workers or even to just attend colleges, while some women just wanted to be free to do what they will. In addition, unlike most suffragists or clubwomen, the New Woman not only contained upper and middle-class participants, but would have also included blue-collar and pink collar workers. The New Woman, in many ways, was everything to everyone, and was often caricatured as an Amazonian man-eater, bicyclist in bloomers, or a hard-drinking chain-smoker. The New Woman, depending on the perspective, were oversexed, undersexed, or same-sexed (lesbian). She may be mannish or the epitome of femininity, she could be the ideal mother and domestic or neglectful due to self-indulgence. Politically, the New Woman could be a patriot, a traitor, a socialist, an anarchist, a reactionary, a reformer, a suffragist, or a conservative, as some have viewed the renowned Gibson Girl.¹⁷ Or as Martha H. Patterson described it concerning the New Woman, who was at once “a protest of, anodyne for, and an appeasement to the ideological imperatives of the dominant icon.”¹⁸ Clearly, the reporting of the activities of the New Woman created numerous stereotypes, some true and some untrue, that defined what a New Woman was for at least the next three or four decades.

Most of the first New Woman sought education as a way of advancing their rights. Most of these women desired to become scientists, medical doctors, lawyers or other professionals. Sarah Grand argued that “man deprived of us all [women] proper education, and then jeered at us because we had no education.”¹⁹ In addition, there were also several New Women who sought education that was not completely removed from the gender roles of the day. Although it was not new at this time, and it continues to be highly regarded, education was promoted as the tonic needed to cure society of its ills. Some of these women, influenced by German Pastor J.F. Oberlin and his housekeeper, Louisa Scheppler,

¹⁷ Angélique Richardson and Chris Willis ed. *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact: Fin-de-siècle Feminisms* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), xii.

¹⁸ Martha H. Patterson, *Beyond the Gibson Girl: Reimagining the American New Woman, 1895-1915* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 3.

¹⁹ Grand, “New Aspect of the Woman Question,” 31.

argued that children's education was vital for a productive society, especially if the children's parents were not able to because of their work.²⁰ One prominent adherent to this philosophy was Charlotte Perkins Gilman, who argued that society needed to realize the "all-engrossing importance" of education for "the first years of childhood." Gilman further contended that American youths needed "love and wisdom from the best among us who will give successive lives to the service of children..."²¹ The rights of children include freedom from forced labor, proper education, and to some, a suitable home life. Grand and Gilman believed that proper education was essential to a better humanity and viewed education as one of the most important criteria's for this development. Furthermore, Gilman's views perfectly align with Oberlin and Scheppler's as well as the *Kindergarten* and the social workers movements that sprouted throughout North America, Europe, and Japan.

While the first generations of New Woman fought for suffrage and the right to take part in higher education, some sought expanded freedoms in a more general manner. These could be "women firsts," such as the first women to swim the English Channel or dive underwater, but for most New Woman it was more benign activities.²² However, it cannot be understated that for many in the New Woman Movement, physicality, most often in public spaces, served as a key conceptual and corporeal proof of equality. So blatant in their use of physicality, numerous periodicals at the time noted it in their pieces about the New Woman. Several periodicals focused on women's physical work. In 1903, the *New York Times* wrote a lengthy article entitled "Women in the Territories," detailing the numerous occupations that woman successfully undertook in the West. Some of the work was thrust upon them when their husbands died, but others worked with their husbands. The article mentions Marion Phelps, who became a successful consultant for "gold-quartz," and Mrs. Victor Daniels, who spared her family from a life in poverty by successfully stopping cow thieves from stealing the family's herd while her husband was traveling. The article ends with a telling testimonial of her and others efforts: "The women of the Western

²⁰ Because of his dedication to helping the working class, several universities have been named after him, including Oberlin University in Ohio.

²¹ Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The New Womanhood," in *The American New Woman Revisited, A Reader, 1894-1930*, ed. Martha Patterson (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 149-150.

²² Lisa Fetheringill Zwicker, "Swimming Women and Social Change," *Currents* (Winter 2013).

Plains are as quick, if not quicker...to put into practice modern ideals.”²³ In this article, not only did the *New York Times* report the details, it portrayed these women positively. A *Munsey's Magazine* article laments that women were perpetrating customary male criminal activity, strong-armed robbery and burglary. While this piece seems satirical, it ends with the keen observation: “...let us hear no more of the exploded myth of ‘women’s weakness.’”²⁴ Obviously, the role of women was in flux and the periodicals of the time sought to capture the emerging cultural paradigm shift.

Related to physical movement in public spaces was the changing and developing dress for women. Although it originated in Turkey, the bloomer became known and named after the chief promoter of it in the United States, Amelia Bloomer.²⁵ Bloomer understood that the garment allowed its wearers unrestricted movement. Thus it would allow women to have more agency and autonomy regarding dress as well as an unparalleled sense of mobility. This shows the degree of overlap between physicality and public spaces that may be missed when just focusing on one or the other. During the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, bloomers were promoted as the perfect dress item for bicyclists. Annie Londonderry, on her legendary bicycle tour around the world, wore them and after the race she wrote that she was a “‘a new woman’...if that term means that I believe I can do anything that any man can do.”²⁶ Several newspaper accounts and pictures portrayed New Women heavily drinking or smoking, dressed in bloomers and then afterward zooming through the streets.²⁷ Earlier than these examples, Agnes Mathews meandered through the streets of Cincinnati in pantaloons. She was quickly arrested, but then released when the police “declared that he found nothing in the Constitution of the United States or the laws of

²³ “Women in the Territories: Some of their Achievements in Fields of Energy Generally filled by Men—Typical Examples, Including a Mining Speculator and a Cowboy, *New York Times*, May 10, 1903.

²⁴ “Women in Another New Role,” in *The American New Woman Revisited, A Reader, 1894-1930*, ed. Martha Patterson (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 61.

²⁵ Amelia Bloomer may be one of the most unheralded women’s rights activists in the United States. Bloomer was born conventional raised in Homer, New York, and although she only received a minimal formal education, she became a school teacher and was active at the Seneca Falls Convention (1848). In 1849, she became the editor of one of the first newspapers dedicated to women, *The Lily*, which proclaimed to be “DEVOTED TO THE INTERESTS OF WOMEN” and the “emancipation of Woman from Intemperance, Injustice, Prejudice, and Bigotry.” See Patricia Marks, *Bicycles, Bangs, and Bloomers: The New Woman in the Popular Press* (University Press of Kentucky, 1990).

²⁶ Peter Zheutlin, “Chasing Annie: The Woman Who Changed My Life Was Brave, Cunning, Daring And Free—And I Never Met Her,” *Bicycling* (May 2005): 68.

²⁷ “Bloomers at the Bar,” in *The American New Woman Revisited, A Reader, 1894-1930*, ed. Martha Patterson (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 51.

Ohio that forbade a woman to wear trousers.”²⁸ Consequently, physicality and the freedom of movement, both out of the corset and on to bicycles, or from corset to the loose fitting dancing dresses of the flapper, have long been a traditional aspect of women’s liberation.

The New Woman’s revolt against expected societal roles created controversy as sympathetic people did not fully grasp the New Woman’s beliefs. In addition, more traditional forces often fought back, sometimes violently, most notably during woman suffrage parade of 1913. Even people who seemed to be natural allies to the New Women attacked certain groups that would normally be included within their group. Ouida claimed that education was excellent in “its preparation for the world, its rough destruction of personal conceit [for men]; but for women it can only be hardening and deforming...The publicity of a college must be odious to a young girl of refined and delicate feeling.”²⁹ Essentially, arguing that women were incapable of demonstrating restraint and logic that was needed for life in the public sphere. A decade later, suffragist Agnes Hudson Young, lamented that the New Woman who rebelled against oppression out of “their sense of justice” were “lumped together with the New Woman who kept “saloons, tend bar, smoke cigarettes, etc.”³⁰ Feminist author Ella W. Winston bemoaned that New Woman lost her “womanliness which she apparently scorn[ed]” yet “fail[ed] to attain the manliness for which she strive[ed].”³¹ Russian immigrant and anarchist Emma Goldman also criticized similar women, “Another great error in the ideal new woman...is that of aping the male, seeking to become masculine...”³² These were traits that were clearly in-line with flappers compared to more politically and socially oriented New Woman, and clearly anti-capitalist and anti-consumption. Young, and the other women, did not exclude these women as part of the New Woman Movement, but wished that they maintained, or even supported, reform. However, these authors failed to recognize that smoking in saloons, attending university, or otherwise acting like a “man,” was also subversive; they sought the ability to create a life of their choosing.

²⁸ “Woman in Trousers,” *Memphis Daily Appeal*, October 19, 1869.

²⁹ Ouida, “The New Woman,” 38-39.

³⁰ Agnes Hudson Young, in *The American New Woman Revisited, A Reader, 1894-1930*, ed. Martha Patterson (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 4.

³¹ Ella W. Winston, “Foibles of the New Woman,” in *The American New Woman Revisited, A Reader, 1894-1930*, ed. Martha Patterson (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 99.

³² Emma Goldman, “The New Woman,” in *The American New Woman Revisited, A Reader, 1894-1930*, ed. Martha Patterson (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 63.

Soon after the culmination of the New Woman, suffrage, and clubwomen movements, several women began to revel in their newfound liberties and practice what some viewed as frivolity. Called the Modern Girl, these women were known to be fashionable in her appearance, especially those in magazines, films, and advertisements. They represented themselves as youthful and distinctive, who always kept that appearance through their styles in public places, whether it was in jazz clubs or while standing in the streets. The Modern Girl cut their hair short, wore cosmetics and short dresses, and was not opposed to drinking and smoking. In public spaces they pushed their public presence in different directions than the New Woman: the Modern Girl parked in cars, petted at parties, and would go out alone with numerous men, most of which were not their future husbands. In essence, they flaunted their freedoms at the expense of values that were held by most of their parents.

Women's rights advocacy was necessary as a precedent to the Modern Girl. According to Kathy Peiss, the onset of the "beauty industry was inextricably tied to young women's experiences of modernity, and the ways that experience was interpreted and marketed in consumer culture."³³ In a world that was surrounded by consumption as a means of modernity, the Modern Girl used consumption in much the same ways as her New Woman predecessors, but often with differing products. In this manner, the Modern Girl was a natural extension of the New Woman Movement, but it was also what distinguished the Modern Girl from many of the earlier New Woman.

Youth after WWI, both in the US and East Asia, experienced a new period of freedom between puberty and adulthood, one largely filled with dating and consumption. While these young adults were working, they were not saddled with parental control, children, or the dictates of society, which resulted in behaviors that would have been inconceivable in the previous generation. This gap, largely resulting from increased college attendance and urban life, led to rise of peer groups and eventual subcultures that maintained their identity through conformism. This conformity was done through fashion which "helped identify an individual with peers locally and nationally." This gave youth "a distinctive air and the group identity that enhanced a sense of personal security. Thus, youths could indulge in fads which would

³³ Kathy Peiss, "Girls Lean Back Everywhere," in *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization*, ed. Alys Eve Weinbaum et al. (Durham: NC, Duke University Press, 2008), 347.

otherwise appear ludicrous,” which “could be worn safely, indeed proudly, and an individual could defy adult derision because the fad identified one with the group which provided support in opposition.”³⁴

While these groups were conformist regarding aesthetics, their values were similar to the dominant culture: “youth rarely provoked adult authority on the high ground of theory.”³⁵ In other words, they never became “radical” in the formal sense, but they disrupted the status quo via circumvention, derision, and distraction. So in many ways they had more in common with earlier women’s activists than they were credited for, but they did it in ways that were more in line with previous generation of clubwomen activists or some of the New Woman than typical suffragists or women progressives.

A Brief Introduction of Women’s Rights in China

Within the Chinese context, the antecedent reform movements were different than the U.S., yet the struggle for Chinese women to have an increasing public presence remained similar. Confucianism loomed large over Chinese culture and it permeated all aspects of society. For example, Chinese elites were originally the scholar official class chosen by a largely superficially meritocratic system, the Civil Service Examination which tested knowledge of certain Confucian classics. Although by the early modern period, wealthy merchants had gained considerable clout. Confucianism also influenced the roles of women and were largely based on Neo-Confucian idea of the “Three Obediences and Four Virtues” originally articulated in the *Rites of Zhou* and the *Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial*. Soon Confucian scholars started to teach the ideal women should maintain the four feminine virtues of wifely virtue, wifely speech, wifely manner/appearance, and wifely work. This was then coupled with the three obediences for a woman to follow first her father, then the husband, and finally her sons in widowhood. Following the virtues and by being obedient, young girls became virtuous women, eventually leading to the 19th century idea of “good wife, wise mother.”

What partly allowed for the emergence of these feminist groups and then later the *modeng xiaojie*, the Chinese Modern Girl, was the international interest in China, and particularly Shanghai due to its proximity to the Yangzi River. Starting with the First Opium War (1839-1842), the British occupied

³⁴ Paula S. Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 231.

³⁵ Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful*, 376.

the city. The Treaty of Nanking, which ended the war, opened Shanghai for international trade. Quickly other treaties followed, and colonial control of Shanghai and other cities led to increased nationalism and anti-foreign sentiments throughout China. Concurrently, Shanghai received numerous displaced people from the largely religious-based Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864). People throughout the multi-ethnic Chinese Empire, but especially those along the Yangzi Delta, sought refuge within Shanghai for its unique opportunities and its growing international commerce. Eventually the unequal treaties culminated in the Boxer Uprising (1899-1901), in which the largely Western Eight-Nation Alliance brutally suppressed the Boxers, which largely consisted of unemployed teenagers gathered around monasteries and trained in traditional martial arts, which Westerners referred to as “boxing.”³⁶ The hostilities ended with another unequal treaty, the Boxer Protocol (1901), which forced several of the Boxers and the few supportive government officials to be either executed or exiled to Chinese Turkestan. The treaty also further opened Shanghai to foreign influence, including easy access to contemporary technology, philosophy, literature, and eventually music and cinema.³⁷ Shanghai also had an influx of foreigners living within the city, including refugees fleeing the Soviet Union and Germany.³⁸ This mixture of indigenous and foreign ideas in Shanghai contributed to its cosmopolitan nature while also allowing concepts like feminism to spread rapidly throughout the city.

Interesting enough, four books written as guide books for women’s behavior helped spawn the modern women’s movement in China: Ban Zhao’s *Admonitions for Women* (*Nǚjiè*), *Women’s Analects* (*Nǚ lúnyǔ*) by Song Ruoxin and Song Ruozhou, Empress Xu’s *Domestic Lessons* (*Nèixùn*), and *Sketch of a Model for Women* (*Nüfan jielu*) by Lady Liu. These works collectively extolled women’s roles as complementary to male roles. They also emphasized the need for girls to have a diverse education to fulfill her role as mother and wife. Starting around 1850, a number of women took advantage of such texts and argued that they needed more education. Calling themselves *xianyuan* (worthy ladies), they

³⁶ The Eight-Nation Alliance consisted of Japan, Russia, Great Britain, France, Austro-Hungary, Germany, Italy, and the United States.

³⁷ Zhang Zhen, *Amorous History of the Silver Screen* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 50-52; Leo Oujan Lee, *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930-1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 30-37.

³⁸ Ibid.

patterned themselves after an older group of women called the *xianyuan*, who were known for their talent, knowledge, intellectual curiosity, and independence. It was within this context that some Chinese New Women employed existing tradition to gain certain rights, but specifically the right to a modern education. Within this context they maintained the traditional idea of “good wife, wise mother” all the while guarding their “virtue, purified [their] minds, and cultivated [their] tenderness” from outside negative influences. However, just as in the American setting, education was intrinsically tied to women in public spaces. This was problematic to more traditional leaders and the contention this caused cannot be understated. The New Women as *xianyuan*, maintained an aura of virtuousness by maintaining traditional societal roles as they pursued “proper” reform, but not all Chinese New Women or feminists followed this path.³⁹

One of the best known examples of a Chinese women striking out against the idea of “good wife, wise mother,” but not abandoning Confucianism entirely was anarcho-feminist He-Yin Zhen. Born He Ban, she was raised in a prosperous family and received a good education focusing on classical Confucian texts. By 1903, she married Liu Shipai and took the name He Zhen (He means “Thunderclap”), but signed all published writings as He-Yin Zhen to include her mother's maiden name. They moved frequently, even living in Tokyo for a while, before settling in Shanghai. Throughout the writings of He-Yin, she detailed the current conditions of Chinese women such as focusing women's education on home making skills, money runs everything including marriage and so consequently women marry for money to have comfort, and ultimately women with power will use the existing structures to pressure women without power. He-Yin came to these conclusions, not by the rejection of Confucian thoughts, which was gaining in popularity, but by arguing from Confucian beliefs regarding human nature.⁴⁰ The conditions outlined by He-Yin, and her use of Confucianism, informed her anarchist tendencies as she believed it was the only way to rectify these problems without the bloodshed produced by Marxist Revolution. She also

³⁹ Nanxiu Qian, “Revitalizing the Xianyuan (Worthy Ladies) Tradition: Women in the 1898 Reforms,” *Modern China* 29, no. 4 (January 2003): 424.

⁴⁰ Lydia Liu, Rebecca E. Karl and Dorothy Ko, ed. *The Birth of Chinese Feminism: Essential Texts in Transnational Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 15.

advocated for a communalized work system that would promote equality among all classes and sexes.⁴¹

This places women clearly in public spaces, yet her strongest contribution was her promotion of a modern educational system for both men and women.

He-Yin Zhen opened her essay “On the Question of Women's Liberation,” by declaring that “for thousands of years, the world has been dominated by the rule of man. This rule is marked by class distinctions over which men—and men only—exert proprietary rights.”⁴² He-Yin then stated that “to rectify the wrongs,” China “must first abolish the rule of men and introduce equality among human beings, which means that the world must belong equally to men and women. The goal of equality cannot be achieved except through women's liberation.”⁴³ He-Yin then explained in the rest of the essay how this developed and why women's liberation was the only way to rectify these problems of class within Chinese society. According to He-Yin, women's confinement to the home has led to the deterioration of their morals, especially sexual standards. He-Yin then argued that if women were no longer limited to their family's authority, to marry who she desires, she would be less promiscuous. He-Yin then concluded her piece with two succinct points that all women should “partake in the joys of freedom.”⁴⁴ The first point is that women should enjoy professional independence and the second is that all women should have equal rights to participate fully within the political system.⁴⁵ Both of these points, contains elements that were similar to the desires of New Women and Modern Girls in North America.

Men also took an interest in the roles of women. In “On Women's Education,” scholar Liang Qichao argued that the root of Chinese national weakness was women's lack of education and he gives four reasons. The first point involves the failure to apply the maxim “it is necessary for everyone in a country to have an occupation and be able to support himself” to women.⁴⁶ The second problem was the

⁴¹ He-Yin Zhen, “On the Question of Women's Labor,” in *The Birth of Chinese Feminism: Essential Texts in Transnational Theory*, ed. Lydia Liu, Rebecca E. Karl and Dorothy Ko (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 90-91.

⁴² He-Yin Zhen, “On the Question of Women's Liberation,” in *The Birth of Chinese Feminism: Essential Texts in Transnational Theory*, ed. Lydia Liu, Rebecca E. Karl and Dorothy Ko (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 53.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ He-Yin Zhen, “On the Question of Women's Liberation,” 70.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Liang Qichao, “On Women's Education,” in *The Birth of Chinese Feminism: Essential Texts in Transnational Theory*, ed. Lydia Liu, Rebecca E. Karl and Dorothy Ko (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 190.

belief in the false maxim: “In women, lack of talent is a virtue.”⁴⁷ The third point was that in Western societies, women became educated to be able to help in child rearing as “a small infant is naturally close to the mother.”⁴⁸ His last argument for educating women was that at one time, Chinese intellectuals believed in prenatal education, much as modern Western scientists do, to help the child before birth. Liang then concluded this section by declaring that educated people of his day believed in “three important matters: to protect the nation, to protect the species, and to protect education [...] the protection of the species necessarily begins with and pivots on the education of women.”⁴⁹ The constitutional monarchist Kang Youwei, argued from a similar perspective: China’s “present trouble l[ay] in clinging to old institutions without knowing how to change” and “if the national policy is not fixed and public opinion not united, it will be impossible for [China] to give up the old and adopt the new.”⁵⁰ Both Kang and Liang were arguing from a very Western perspective, but they gave clear insights and reasonable solutions to the problem.

While Chinese feminists debated other issues, there was one item that united feminists throughout China and eventually the world: foot binding. The practice of foot binding was around for centuries and consisted of wrapping bandages around the feet of girls, normally between the ages of 4 to 9, often tucking the toes under the foot with the intent to reshape the foot and to restrict its length.⁵¹ While it has an undetermined origin, it became popular during the Song dynasty, mostly practiced among elites, and waxed and waned in popularity until the around the turn of the 20th century, when male and female Chinese feminists *en masse* called for its eradication.⁵² In 1887, the Foot Emancipation Society was founded and most members not only vowed to not bind their daughter’s feet, they also swore that they would not allow their sons to marry woman with bound feet. The organization grew rapidly during the Hundred Days’ Reform of 1898. Started by Guangxu Emperor, the Hundred Days’ Reform of 1898 was an attempt to modernize China and contained efforts to reform along cultural, political, and educational

⁴⁷ Ibid, 192.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 193.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 195.

⁵⁰ Kang Youwei, “The Need for Reforming Institutions,” in *Sources of Chinese Tradition, Second Edition, Volume II* ed., Wm. Theodore de Bary et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 269.

⁵¹ Estelle Freedman, *No Turning Back: The History of Feminism and the Future of Women* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2003), 33.

⁵² Freedman, *No Turning Back*, 61, 214.

lines. The Reform ended in a *coup d'état* headed by Empress Dowager Cixi and her conservative forces. Some reform principles, however, continued and she quickly gave a decree banning foot binding, but quickly rescinded it under pressure. Foot binding was practiced throughout the Chinese diaspora, including the U.S., and the practice was so despised that one Chinese American physician stated: “deforming a foot” was “just as abusive as that of binding the waist.”⁵³

While attacking foot binding, economic autonomy was frequently linked to binding. Liang Qichao argued that “All two hundred million of our women are consumers; not a single one has produced anything of profit... No wonder men keep them as dogs, horses, and slaves.”⁵⁴ Feminist poet and political martyr Qiu Jin, who painfully removed her own bindings, was involved in the abolishment of the practice and often gave speeches at various anti-foot binding societies. Qiu Jin reiterated Liang Qichao’s reasoning: “You who are married to men without money should support your husbands in their labors and not spend your days in idleness, dining on unearned food.”⁵⁵ In this speech, she argued that women should be educated and that any women who did not oppose feet binding were making themselves and their children subservient.⁵⁶ Qiu Jin also argued that women needed to be not only mentally fit, but also physically fit, which explains her eventually dressing as men and learning traditional Chinese martial skills and trying to assassinate government officials.⁵⁷ This and other messages by Qiu Jin were designed to not only admonish, but to encourage the women of China to become self-advocates. Eventually, the new Republic of China’s government outlawed foot binding in 1912, but it was still widely practiced. This led to many of the intellectuals of the May Fourth Movement to argue that foot binding was corporal proof of China’s need to modernize. By the early 1920s, Revolutionary leader Sun Yat-sen and local

⁵³ Dr. Tielun quoted in Judy Yung, “The Social Awakening of Chinese American Women,” in *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U. S. Women's History* ed. Ellen Dubois and Vicki Ruiz (London: Routledge, 2000), 197.

⁵⁴ Liang Qichao quoted in Dorothy Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters: A Revisionist History of Footbinding* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2005), 21.

⁵⁵ Qiu Jin, “An Address to My Two Hundred Million Women Compatriots in China,” in *The Search for Modern China: A Documentary Collection* ed. Janet Chen et al. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2013), 187.

⁵⁶ Fan Hong, *Footbinding, Feminism and Freedom: The Liberation of Women's Bodies in Modern China*. (Portland, Oregon: Frank Cass, 1997), 45-46; 90-96.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

warlords such as Yan Xishan actively sought to end the practice, as well as the nascent Nanjing regime, but it continued into the 1950s.⁵⁸

Shanghai's unique environment, both geographical and cultural, allowed for a fluid exchange of people, culture, ideas, and concepts that was practically unparalleled in the world. Therefore, strong nationalist views and international influences sustained an atmosphere that was open to experimentation and skepticism, which were both signs of Shanghai's modernity. In addition, Shanghai's openness to foreign influence helped produce the Chinese Modern Girl, or the *modeng xiaojie*, which was one of the most unique expressions of the aesthetic in the world. A Modern Girl aesthetic that showed marked indigenous and international influences and aspects within the Modern Girl style. Even the name for the Chinese name for the Modern Girl, *modeng xiaojie*, showed the Western influence on China as it was a combination of the transliterated word "modern" and the Chinese word for "girl." All of these influences, including colonial powers and Chinese rights advocates, converged to produce an environment within Shanghai that allowed Chinese feminism and the *modeng xiaojie* to blossom, with similar tensions between the two that occurred in the U.S.

A Brief Introduction on Class and Women's Rights in Japan

Although China and Japan both have long and often shared histories, Japan's neo-Confucian society was not based on meritocracy. In fact, traditional Japanese society greatly entwined social status and economics. Occupation was directly linked with social status and birth. The hereditary status of people was so restrictive that control over marriage and clothing was strictly enforced.⁵⁹ Within Japan, there were essentially four classes of people, including a nobility-warrior class, peasants, artisans, and merchants, and within each of these classes there were several subsets. On the outside fringes of society were two groups called the *eta* and the *hinin*. The medieval Japanese based their social stratification on a Neo-Confucian model, believing that its emphasis on accountability and obligation would bring stability and order to Japanese society.⁶⁰ Japanese nobility at this time was further subdivided into the emperor, shogun, daimyos, and the warrior-class samurai. The emperor was the highest member of society, but the

⁵⁸ Hong, *Footbinding, Feminism and Freedom*, 1, 92-96.

⁵⁹ Ian Neary, "Burakumin at the End of History," *Social Research* 70 (2003), 269.

⁶⁰ Neary, 269; James McClain, *Japan: A Modern History* (W.W. Norton & Company: New York, 2002), 34, 78.

shogun contained the political power.⁶¹ The daimyos, or noble families, controlled large land areas and answered only to the shogun, but in many ways they were autonomous.⁶² The next group was the samurai, which also included the daimyo and shogun, who pledged absolute loyalty to the daimyos in return for their patronage. The samurai were known to be brave and tenacious, and tried to become idealized versions of the Chinese gentry.⁶³ Prejudices were common among the samurai, who often asked for divine protection against being killed by commoners.⁶⁴

The largest societal group was the peasants, followed by the artisans and merchants. Most peasants practiced agriculture and rice was the most common food crop, while cash crops such as tea and vegetables were grown in the mountains.⁶⁵ Peasant farmers were taxed heavily, with varying tax rates on commercial agriculture and an increased amount for nonfood items such as indigo. Peasants did not own the land and taxes were taken from their yields. Artisans and merchants were the lowest class, but the daimyos supported and encouraged the artisans and the merchants because they were commercially successful. However, the daimyos did little to elevate societal views of them. Commercialization allowed artisans and merchants to strive, and typically they were more prosperous than the other groups.⁶⁶ The circulation of money also helped the financial situation of the merchant class, but the samurai opposed monetary exchanges believing it would cause class confusion and disorder.⁶⁷ Meanwhile on the fringes of society were pariah groups such as the *eta* and the *hinin*. The *hinin* were people who had been part of the social classes, but lost their privileges because they were no longer considered productive.⁶⁸ The *etas* were a hereditary group that did tasks that were considered unacceptable to Japanese society, such as digging graves and making leather, preferring the term *kawata* (leatherworker).⁶⁹

When the American fleet under Commodore Matthew C. Perry arrived in Japan in 1853, it created an environment of far lasting and far reaching change. The U.S. sought international trading

⁶¹ S. Driver. *Japan* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 2008.), 1039.

⁶² McClain, *Japan: A Modern History*, 5.

⁶³ McClain, *Japan: A Modern History*, 77, 80.

⁶⁴ Yamaoto Tsunetomo, *Hagakure: The Book of the Samurai*, trans. W. Wilson, (Kodansha: Tokyo, 1979), 154.

⁶⁵ McClain, *Japan: A Modern History*, 60.

⁶⁶ McClain, *Japan: A Modern History*, 55-59.

⁶⁷ Tsunetomo, *Hagakure*, 62.

⁶⁸ McClain, *Japan: A Modern History*, 101.

⁶⁹ Neary, "Burakumin at the End of History," 278; McClain, *Japan: A Modern History*, 100.

partners and docking stations for U.S. ships. When Perry arrived in Japan, the Shogun, who had been acting as the military ruler over the emperor for several centuries, had no other recourse but to end Japan's isolationist's policy as they had no military capabilities to withstand a modern navy. Soon afterwards, the United Kingdom, Russia, and other Western colonial powers imposed on Japan what became known as "unequal treaties," which stipulated that Japan must allow citizens of those nations to live and travel freely within Japan without levying taxes against them or to be brought before Japanese magistrates. To several of the daimyo and samurai, the shogunate's failure to protect Japan from outsiders was egregious and eventually led to civil unrest and eventual open warfare. The Boshin War (1868-1869), between the Shogun and the daimyos, led to the Emperor being restored to nominal supreme power, who with the leaders of the uprising, ended the rigid caste system and actively sought modernization including the introduction of Western advisors.

This time of political change in Japan created an environment where women could be more open about their need for an increase in rights. One such attempt was made through the publication and circulation of literary magazines. Founded in 1911 by Raichō Hiratsuka, *Seitō* (literally translated Bluestocking), became Japan's first women-led literary magazine. The first edition of *Seitō* opened with the words, "In the beginning, woman was the sun, an authentic person/Today, she is the moon/Living through others/Reflecting the brilliance of others.../And now, *Seitō*, a journal created for the first time with the brains and hands of today's Japanese women, raises its voice."⁷⁰ Raichō Hiratsuka soon started to discuss women's issues as well as literature, including sex and marriage for love. Major contributors included the controversial women's rights poet Yosano Akiko, and anarchist Ito Noe, who also became the Editor-in-Chief for the last year of publication and focused on divisive topics such as prostitution, abortion, and the works of Emma Goldman. While most of the people who participated in *Seitō* were survived the period between world wars, Ito Noe was murdered by police officers, with her lover and his nephew, while under arrest after the Great Kantō Earthquake on September 16, 1923. Although Ito died,

⁷⁰Jan Bardsley, "Seito and the Resurgence of Writing by Women," in *The Columbia Companion to Modern East Asian Literature*, ed. Joshua Mostow (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003): 93-98; Sharon L. Sievers. *Flowers in Salt: The Beginnings of Feminist Consciousness in Modern Japan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), 182-183.

women's rights advocacy still persisted in Japan as Margaret Sanger and Japanese feminist and birth control advocate Shidzue Katō traveled Japan promoting birth control and women's health.

The contributors to *Seitō* (often called “Bluestockings” after their British inspiration), were considered controversial and divisive within Japan and commonly mocked as the “So-Called New Woman.”⁷¹ Their influence helped them in carving “out more and freer space in the public sphere for women” in Japan.⁷² Due to their Western attire, their ideologies regarding love and sex, and the frequent tabloid scandals among their members, the Bluestockings were routinely rumored to have been seduced by foreign ideas. In addition, they were accused of self-indulgence and promiscuity, preying on naïve young men. These allegations served as ammunition against the Bluestockings as they often spoke out against conservative women's groups and voiced their concern for lower-class women. The Bluestockings were neither able to maintain their movement nor make it spread enough to help all Japanese women, but their foundational principles, such as asserting the rights of women in public spaces, created the cultural, political, and social milieu that allowed for the Modern Girl's development in Japan.⁷³ It should be noted that some Japanese scholars argue that there was only a subtle distinction between Japan's New Woman (*atarashii onna*) and the Modern Girl (*Moga*), and it would be unjust to make a rigid distinction.⁷⁴ This goes along with some scholars noting the inability for some Japanese literary sources to give a cogent description of who was considered a *Moga* while similar women were omitted.⁷⁵ However, the distinction between perception and reality, both self-definition and the public, can be seen within the choosing of the Japanese name for the Modern Girl, *moga*. The Japanese word “*moga*” was an abbreviation of “*modan galu*” which was a translation of the English phrase “modern girl,” which gives the *moga* a clearly Westernized perception to the Japanese people. This confusion has clear ties to understanding why and how some scholars frequently overlook the American flapper's reform activities.

⁷¹ Jan Bardsley, “The New Woman Exposed: Redefining Women in Modern Japanese Photography” in *The New Woman International. Representations in Photography and Film from the 1870s through the 1960s* ed. Elizabeth Otto and Vanessa Rocco, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan, 2012), 51.

⁷² Bardsley, “The New Woman Exposed,” 41.

⁷³ Bardsley, “The New Woman Exposed,” 39, 45, 52.

⁷⁴ Ruri Ito, “Colonial Modernity and Mobility among Okinawan Women,” in *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization* ed. Alys Eve Weinbaum et al. (Durham: NC, Duke University Press, 2008), 240.

⁷⁵ Miriam Silverberg, *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense: The Mass Culture of Japanese Modern Times* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 52-54.

Conclusion

The Modern Girl was a phenomenon that could not have developed before this time. Growing affluence in the 1920s allowed the majority of people to purchase non-necessities such as fashionable clothing and cigarettes, while the expansion of mass production lowered production costs and permitted people to afford luxury items that otherwise would not be available.⁷⁶ Increased industrialization also created upturns in farm production as well as canning and other food production methods lowered the price of food, while expanding consumer's free time by eliminating the need to grow and preserve one's own food. Smaller family sizes further decreased the amount of time needed for food preparation, and thus increased the amount of time expended on leisure activities for both families and individuals.⁷⁷ Women began to participate in activities and adopted beliefs that were considered modern, as the decade's long struggle for these rights started to culminate during this unique time in American history. These developments allowed the market, and the marketers, of the 1920s to focus on women as an untapped source of revenue, allowing the market to expand to a consumer-based economy. Flappers constituted one example of this development, and used consumption in largely unexpected ways, largely to assert agency.

This chapter seeks to place women's rights within the proper context to understand the connections between them and the flappers. The debate between Grand and Ouida, while only briefly detailed, succinctly illustrates the anxieties about the roles of women during this time of flux. It also situates the changing roles of women in the 1920s throughout the world. This debate, which expanded beyond Grand and Ouida, helps explain the ambiguity that some older New Women held toward the generation of women that emerged from the devastation of the Great War who asserted pleasure and consumption as essential components of freedom. Politicians, seeking political support, started to emphasize policies that they felt appealed to women. These would include children's health, education,

⁷⁶ Julian Sivulka, *Soap, Sex, and Cigarettes: A Cultural History of American Advertising* (Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2012), 91-92, 129-130.

⁷⁷ Zeitz, *Flappers*, 46, 55.

clean cities, and world peace.⁷⁸ Other activists, such as Margaret Sanger, went to China and Japan to teach them about their various goals and reforms. Suffrage organizations like NAWSA became the League of Women Voters and advocated for similar reform items. Meanwhile Alice Paul and the NWP promoted the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in an effort to insure that women received full equality and not just enfranchisement.⁷⁹ These ERA arguments would be similar to He-Yin's numerous essays about egalitarianism. In addition, the concurrent strands of the New Woman Movement and the clubwomen's movement, which lasted well into the 1920s, influenced the flappers, and *The Flapper* outlined in this thesis.

⁷⁸ Lynn Dumenil, *The Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), 98-100, 138-144.

⁷⁹ Paul's original 1923 amendment, nicknamed the Mott's Amendment after early suffragist Lucretia Mott stated that, "Men and women shall have equal rights throughout the United States and every place subject to its jurisdiction. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation."

Chapter 2

“Old Fogies Will Read This Magazine at Their Peril:”

The American Flapper as Militant¹

At the start of 1922, flapper actress Colleen Moore was nearing the pinnacle of her career. Her last two movies, *The Lotus Eater* and *Come On Over*, were hits and Moore was named as one of the inaugural Western Association of Motion Picture Advertisers, or WAMPAS, Baby Stars.² During this time, Moore gave a brief interview to the *Chicago Daily News*, which was later reprinted in *The Flapper*, a self-styled magazine for flappers. The interviewer, Gladys Hall, mused that Moore was “enthusiastic for the maligned misses as most doleful individuals are against them!” In this passage, Moore was defending the flapper from critics that she spurns as miserable. Moore then proclaimed, “I’m a flapper myself [...] A flapper is just a little girl trying to grow up.” During the interview, Moore continued this line of thinking by stating that a flapper “wears flapper clothes out of a sense of mischief—because she thinks them rather ‘smart’ and naughty. And what every day, healthy, normal little girl doesn’t sort of like to be smart and naughty?” Moore goes on to say that the flapper “likes her freedom, and she likes to be a bit daring, and snap her cunning, little manicured fingers in the face of the world.” Hall concluded the article with an interesting statement given by Moore, emphasizing a rather flapper strong sense of flapper autonomy, with a mix of self-promotion. “She’s a trim little craft and brave! The flapper has charm, good looks, good clothes, intellect and a healthy, point of view. I’m proud to ‘flap’—I am.”³

In many ways, Colleen Moore may be as responsible as anyone for the early dissemination of the flapper aesthetic. Consequently, her defense of it is truly helpful for the historian seeking to grasp how flappers promoted their own agency. Moore, in this interview, gives several little quips indicating how at least some flappers viewed themselves, and most of them involve flappers and agency. This interview with Moore also demonstrated that flappers believed that they were capable of making not only independent

¹ See Figure 1: “Table of Contents,” *The Flapper*, January 1923.

² Starting in 1922, the WAMPAS Baby Stars was annually awarded to thirteen young starlets who were on the verge of movie stardom.

³ Gladys Hall, “Flappers Here to Stay, Says Colleen Moore,” *The Flapper*, November, 1922.

decisions, but also rational and informed decisions about their life and well-being. While Moore was speaking about the American flapper experience, this occurrence was similar throughout the world.

Most historians follow the lead of Frederick Lewis Allen's popular history, *Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the 1920s* (1931) by arguing that the flappers were predominately frivolous. This was partly due to the general depiction of the 1920s as a conservative period surrounded by two eras marked by reform. This makes it even harder for scholars to find reform during this time, especially if they were looking for something more akin to progressivism. A quick perusal of Eric Goldman's *Rendezvous with Destiny: A History of Modern American Reform* and Estelle Freedman's *No Turning Back: The History of Feminism and the Future of Women* validate this assertion. *Rendezvous with Destiny* devoted a chapter to the 1920s and gave it the pejorative title "The Shame of the Babbitt's" after the Sinclair Lewis play that also disparaged the decade. Freedman's *No Turning Back*, a popular history book, gave a sweeping history of worldwide feminism, yet the 1920s warranted about four pages, and the 1923 ERA bill receives two, non-consecutive paragraphs. Neither book mentions the two items that were overwhelmingly linked to the decade: flappers and jazz.⁴ Both historians were the best in their fields, yet failed to analyze or even to mention these topics.

The Progressive Era, World War I, and the "Roaring Twenties" were times of rapid change for women. At the beginning of the twentieth century, women around the world fought for equality; they sought education, the right to vote, and the ability to choose their own destiny. During World War I, droves of women were being pulled into factories to work while the men were overseas fighting to make the world "safe for democracy." Even women who did not work outside the home supported the war effort by rationing metals, rolling bandages, or raising "victory gardens." This period of time was, for many women, the first taste of independence. After the war, as men returned home, women were expected to simply turn their backs on the assembly line, and the self-sufficiency that came with it, and return to more traditional roles of wife, mother, and daughter. While many women accepted the return to more traditional gender roles, others were confident in their firm refusal to go back. They wore short hair and shorter dresses, they left their arms exposed, and frequently topped it all off with a cloche hat. The working-class and lower middle-class Modern Girl blurred

⁴ Eric F. Goldman, *Rendezvous with Destiny: A History of Modern American Reform* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952), 284-319; Freedman, *No Turning Back*, 82-83, 175-177.

the formerly distinct class lines by practicing consumption in the same manner as elite flappers, showing how consumption could be a tool to fight against classism.⁵ The convergence of suffrage and other women's rights activism at this historical moment created the catalyst for the flapper aesthetic to blossom.

For flappers to have a voice in the dialogue concerning culturally constructed gender roles, especially those roles that pertained to them, flappers would need the means to speak for themselves. In 1922, *The Flapper* debuted and sought, or at least claimed, to fill this void. Published in Chicago, the magazine contained articles on fashion, health, movies, and noteworthy news stories that affected flappers, sometimes, but not always written in a humorous manner. The magazine also contained comical anecdotes, and the masthead alone indicates that the periodical was marketed toward youth, or at the very least, people with youthful temperaments. Two-thirds of the editorial board were men and associate editor Myrna Serviss was the only "self-avowed flapper" working directly for the magazine and supplied the uncredited materials.⁶ *The Flapper* boasted a circulation of 100,000 issues per month before changing its name in the summer of 1923 to *Experience*. According to Thomas Levish, the former editor of *The Flapper* and the new owner of *Experience*, the name change was due to "owing to irreconcilable differences between the editor and his partner," which may explain the more subdued humor in *Experience*, but it still published similar stories.⁷ The following month, a reader from Muncie, Indiana, stated that the new name "sounds better and more appropriate."⁸ This and other letters indicated that the name change was acceptable and well received. By the summer of 1925, the name changed again to *The Flapper's Experience* and became more of a standard confessional magazine, although it maintained some of its previous advocacy.⁹ *The Flapper*, and its successor magazines, offers scholars a unique and articulate perspective from the sidelines

⁵ Peter Stearns, *Consumerism in World History: The Global Transformation of Desire* (London: Routledge, 2006), 7.

⁶ *The Flapper* was owned by S.A. Cousley, while Thomas Levish served as the managing editor and B.J. Peterson worked as the circulation manager. Myrna Serviss, a self-proclaimed flapper was the associate editor, and helped coordinate the Flapper Flocks, which will be detailed later. It should also be noted that although there would be one flapper on the board, it does not discredit it as these men would have been supporters of flappers. After the change in ownership, Serviss left and most articles from then forward contained a byline. David Sloane described *The Flapper* as "the voice of the liberated women of its era, treating itself as a club magazine and urging a 'Flapper Flock in every town.'" Sloane also contended that *The Flapper* and *Experience/Flapper's Experience* were similar, but unrelated. The direct lineage, however, can be established when examining the initial issues of each magazine, which were not available to Sloane in his study. See David Sloane, *American Humor Magazines and Comic Periodicals* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), 372, 376; Alison Maloney, *Bright Young Things: Life in the Roaring Twenties* (London: Random House Virgin Books, 2012), 18.

⁷ Thomas Levish, "Our Monthly Chat," *Experience*, September 1923.

⁸ "Just Between Ourselves," *Experience*, October 1923.

⁹ Comparably, Encyclopedia Britannica has *Time* magazine's circulation around 175,000 in 1927, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Time-American-magazine>.

of a cultural debate; a perspective that is somewhat ignored by scholars who choose to focus on critics, rather than a pro-flapper point of view.

Many articles in *The Flapper* were anonymous, and as a result, it may be hard to say how much the material reflected the flapper mentality, but considering the influence of Serviss, the material probably does not stray much from her actual sentiments. Consequently, *The Flapper* is unique to this debate as it was a business with a flapper in a leadership role, which gives it a bit more credibility as a vehicle representing flappers. The magazine also reprinted articles from other periodicals that supported and promoted the flapper aesthetic and lifestyle. While some of the source material contained no bylines at times and therefore may be questionable, *The Flapper* gives discerning historians a snapshot of the perspectives of supporters and, to a degree, of flappers themselves. Evidence of this approval can be seen in the numerous letters sent to the editors. However, *The Flapper* was a profit driven business, which could affect the stories and how they were written. This does not discount *The Flapper* as a unique and necessary voice in this debate that needs to be explored to more fully understand how flappers were provocateurs and how *The Flapper* served as a platform for them to respond to their critics.

Defining the Flapper Aesthetic as Art in the Magazine

The magazine offers us a distinctive and articulate definition of flapper. The second edition contained a flapper beauty contest which gave the magazine's definition of a flapper: "a flapper is a flapper whether in street dress, bathing suit or 'knickers.' It's a sort of intangible vivacity about her that identifies the flapper from everybody else. So—if your friends think you're a flapper, chances are you are..."¹⁰ The use of the phrase, "intangible vivacity" was interesting as it expanded the definition of what it meant to be a flapper beyond fashion to include an indescribable ethos, which makes the term more wide-ranging. The contest, which was credited to Serviss in the publication, eschewed the common flapper aesthetic for a more inclusive model, and could have been designed to increase magazine subscriptions, but it could also reflect a more open view of the Modern Girl, a more open view that would include people of all classes as long as they fit the established profile.

Another description can be found in the inaugural issue of *The Flapper*, and later reprinted in the

¹⁰ Myrna Serviss, "Announcing Flapper Beauty Contest," *The Flapper*, June, 1922.

July 1922 edition, was a poem called, “Our Definition of a Flapper.” In the poem, flappers were depicted as independent, graceful, pretty, and saucy, while also being able to flirt to get what they want from life. A flapper’s “soul [was] free” with an unchained will, yet she had a “heart of gold” that produced the “spice of life—and makes some boob a darn good wife.” Opening with the theme of independence and reiterating that the flapper “knows what she wants and gets it” and that “her soul is free,” the poem argues for flapper agency. The poem’s conclusion that a flapper was the “spice of life— and makes some boob a darn good wife” demonstrates that there was not a complete break from traditional roles of marriage and ideals of gender.¹¹ It also implies that the happiest husbands would be those who married a flapper and maintained the lifestyle throughout their marriage. The flapper marriage would then be transformed into a more egalitarian endeavor with the pursuit of passion, pleasure, adventure, and excitement bringing the couple closer together. Zelda Fitzgerald made a similar point when she boldly proclaimed that, “the Flapper comes home, [after a “scandalous” rendezvous] none the worse for wear, to marry, years later, and live happily ever afterwards.”¹²

During this time, women in general started to break conventional gender roles and flappers, in particular, embraced this emerging trend. Their lifestyles not only ignored traditional roles of women regarding sex, they were frequently flirtatious and provocative.¹³ Fitzgerald authored an article called, “Eulogy of a Flapper,” in the June edition of *Metropolitan Magazine* that was later reprinted in *The Flapper*. After demonstrating that the title was satirical, she stated, “[t]he flapper awoke from her lethargy of sub-deb-ism, bobbed her hair, put on her choicest pair of earrings and a great deal of audacity and rouge and went into the battle. She flirted because it was fun to flirt and wore a one-piece bathing suit because she had a good figure ... she was conscious that the things she did were the things she had always wanted to do.”¹⁴ Margaret O’Leary wrote in the *New York Times*, that the “approval of this newest and outwardly outrageous example of social subordination is apt to come from persons who habitually frown on frivolity,

¹¹ “Our Definition of a Flapper,” *The Flapper*, July 1922.

¹² “Our Definition of the Flapper,” *The Flapper*, July 1922; Zelda Fitzgerald, “Eulogy of a Flapper,” *Metropolitan Magazine*, June 1922.

¹³ Kenneth A. Yellis’ “Prosperity’s Child: Some Thoughts on the Flapper,” *American Quarterly* 21 (Spring 1969): 44-45.

¹⁴ Fitzgerald, “Eulogy of a Flapper,” *Metropolitan Magazine*, June 1922; *The Flapper*, July 1922, 2.

while an old fashioned prejudice against her is discovered lurking in the breasts of people.”¹⁵ Both of these articles once again depict flappers as free actors, but they also show emerging cultural trends such as questioning the sexual double standard. These articles also suggest that the Modern Girl knew what they wanted and that fashion—clothing and cosmetics—and open sexuality could be empowering.

Physicality and Public Interaction Between Males and Females

Related to the New Woman before her, the flapper was also concerned with access to the public sphere. In tandem with the rise in free leisure time and increasingly liberal views of women in public spaces, a shift began to occur in how men and women interacted in public. Even before the Jazz Age, young working-class women sought leisure activities, including what historian Kathy Peiss referred to as, “cheap amusements.”¹⁶ Cheap amusements included visits to the theater, amusement parks, and public dances, as well as “parking” on occasions.¹⁷ As women were routinely paid less than men, this led to some women covering the cost of these amusements through what was referred to at the time as “treating.” Treating was essentially the exchange of a women’s company for the cost of the tryst. Treating was generally innocuous; sometimes kissing, caressing, or other forms of touching were included as part of the exchange. Parents, for the most part, considered these “treats” harmless if it involved couples “going steady,” but scandalous and risqué if done on a casual date.¹⁸ Young women who performed various, less serious, sexual acts were referred to as “charity girls” by their potential dates while a “nice girl” was one “who would put it [the penis] in for you.”¹⁹ Although there was an exchange of goods for sexual favors, women who participated in these activities did not view themselves as prostitutes because they were not recompensed strictly for sex, but for their company and sometimes that just happened to include sex.²⁰ Paula S. Fass observed a similar trend in the 1920s. She stated that dating was “something definitely new in the ritual of sexual interaction. It was unlike the informal get-togethers that characterized youth socializing in the village or small town of the nineteenth century, for at such events

¹⁵ Margaret O’Leary, “More Ado about the Flapper,” *New York Times*, April 16, 1922.

¹⁶ Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 6-8; Kathy Peiss, “Charity Girls and City Pleasures,” in *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U. S. Women’s History*, ed. Ellen Dubois and Vicki Ruiz (London: Routledge, 2000), 159, 161.

¹⁷ Zeitz, *Flapper*, 73-74; Peiss, *Cheap Amusements*, 5-7, 54.

¹⁸ Peiss, *Cheap Amusements*, 54.

¹⁹ D. W. Maurer, “Language and the Sex Revolution: World War I through World War II,” *American Speech* 51 (Spring - Summer, 1976), 15.

²⁰ Peiss, *Cheap Amusements*, 110.

there was no pairing early in acquaintance.”²¹ As women entered the public sphere with an increased frequency during the 1920s, they became more visible, prominent, and even gained greater acceptability by men and women alike. On college campuses, petting parties became frequent and it was no longer the taboo for young women and men to find time to be alone, especially in cars, which one observer characterized as “a house of prostitution on wheels.”²²

Treating and the proliferation of women riding in, and then “parking” in, cars contributed to a conservative backlash aimed at regulating flappers in public. For example, the Parents' League of Brooklyn enacted “Blue Laws” that were to be enforced by the group members who would also persuade others to adhere to the ordinances as well as seek to make them officially binding. The rules specifically “for flappers” included restrictions on certain types of clothes and dances, and required social events to be chaperoned, including the walk home. The League also sought rules for the parents of minor children, such as “simple afternoon” dresses being emphasized instead of evening wear and restrictions on “movies or theatres, except those recommended by the school or investigated and approved by parents.”²³ Similar groups were formed in other areas as well. In Washington D.C., the Anti-Flirt Club drafted a set of rules because, “too many motorists are taking advantage of [naïve young women] by offering to take young lady pedestrians in their cars,” warning that, “that these men ‘don't all tender their invitations to save the girls a walk.”²⁴ In addition, the Ku Klux Klan patrolled back-roads on the lookout for teens in parked cars. The Klan also harassed and assaulted women who sought divorces from their husbands, seeking to reestablish the societal norms of earlier times.²⁵

Related to flappers in public spaces, *The Flapper* was also concerned with women’s physicality, which often took the form participation in sports, which was quite common. Jordan Baker, Nick Carraway’s love interest in *The Great Gatsby*, was a frequent amateur golfer and was based on real-life Chicagoan Edith Cummings. *The Flapper* and *Flapper’s Experience* both contained several articles about

²¹ Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful*, 262-263.

²² Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrill Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in Contemporary American Culture* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1929), 114; “Fearing the Flappers: Is the Young Generation in Peril?” *Literary Digest*, May 14, 1921; Kelly Boyer Sagart, *Flapper: A Guide to American Subculture* (Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood Press, 2010), 24.

²³ “Brooklyn Parents' Blue Laws for Flappers; Include a Midnight Curfew and Chaperones,” *New York Times*, June 1, 1922.

²⁴ “10 Girls Start War on Auto Invitation,” *Washington Post*, February 28, 1923. Similar efforts in the area have been around since at least 1897, see “Anti-Flirtation Bill: One in Virginia Legislature to Protect School Girls,” *Boston Morning Journal*, December 20, 1897.

²⁵ Zeitz, *Flapper*, 73-74.

flappers participating in sports including boxing, swimming, track and field events, fencing, rifle shooting, football, tennis, and jiu-jitsu.²⁶ The inclusion jiu-jitsu was noteworthy as they advocated it as a way for the flapper to protect herself from sexual assault, which had ties to earlier New Women who advocated its use to prevent unwanted groping by the masher, as they labeled the perpetrator.²⁷ Olympic hopeful Camelia Sabie and Women's Boxing Champion Carrie Keeley were specifically noted.²⁸ The Carrie Keeley article also contained numerous passages about the benefits of physical health and the flapper. The article started with a quote from Keeley that argued that every flapper was aware that "women's modes and vogues have been bitterly criticized, from the beginning of time. It is my earnest belief that the modern girl, the 'flapper,' has arrived at the nearest approach to REAL WOMANHOOD [emphasis in the original], and she is acquiring beautiful form and health." She continued, the "flapper is better prepared to protect herself when necessity calls than the girl of any other generation." In another section Keeley mentioned that before prohibition saloons once appeared on every corner and currently it was the drug store, but "if the flapper continues her athletic activities" the drug store would become an athletic store "and the flapper will go down in history as the founder of a new race of people who are better physically, mentally, socially and productively." A phrase that seems linked to the eugenics movement. The piece ends with Carrie exhorting the readers to "teach, preach and practice flapper athletics."

Another anonymous editorial titled "Girls! Take Part in Sports" argued from a similar perspective.²⁹ The article declared that it was "about time that the American girl got busy and participated in athletic competition for all she is worth" because for too many girls the "only idea of sport is the fellow who takes her to a dance on Saturday night." It went on to say that the "American flapper, who has distinguished herself by her freedom from the conventions that have bound and shackled the female sex for ages, should lead all in the health, grace, and vigor that are the inevitable result of body development." It also stated that the "most attractive girl is the healthiest girl....it's the flapper with the glow of pure, rich blood reflected in

²⁶ "The Flapper in the Athletic World," *The Flapper*, January 1923; "The Flapper in the Field of Sports," *The Flapper*, March 1923; "Lover of Sports," *Experience*, October, 1923.

²⁷ Kerry Segrave, *Beware the Masher: Sexual Harassment in American Public Places, 1880-1930* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2014), 168-170; Holly Kearn, *Stop Global Street Harassment: Growing Activism around the World* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Publisher, 2010), xiv.

²⁸ "The Flapper in the Field of Sports," *The Flapper*, March 1923; "From a Timid Child to Champion Boxer: A Message to Flappers by Carrie Keeley," *The Flapper*, May 1923.

²⁹ "Girls! Take Part in Sports," *The Flapper*, March 1923.

every pore of her being who holds her own in the crowd and gets the best that life has to offer.” The article then discussed how exercise can be used as a form of rebellion as flappers cannot be jailed “for looking healthy, no matter how much you may turn men’s heads. That’s one way to get ahead of the reformers.” It also stated that “if men don’t get a real move on, they will soon be put in the shade by the flappers who believe not only that health comes before wealth, but that through health everything else is possible.” The piece ended with a call for action: “That’s why they are so envious of the flapper, because the flapper has that which no money can buy—the priceless gift of buoyant health. But it must be constantly renewed if it is to last. Let’s see how our big army of readers will distinguish themselves in 1923 sport history.”

Flappers desired to live and work outside the home and, consequently, to infiltrate the male-dominated public sphere, understandably, created fear and anxiety for both men and non-flapper women. The tension for men would include the commonly detailed belief that women were becoming less “womanly,” and a corollary idea that men would become less “manly.”³⁰ Women who wanted to maintain a more “traditional lifestyle” would have anxious about these new attitudes and behaviors becoming acceptable roles and models for women. This sweeping challenge of the status quo and the incipient form of feminism in action was terrifying to people who did not understand the goals of the flappers. Furthermore, it created anxiety, as well as disgust, among anti-modernists who comprehended the flapper’s objectives but did not want them to succeed. The Modern Girl, as well as the New Women before her, challenged the double standards surrounding women and their social activities.

Rational Clothing as Symbols of Freedom

Another trend in *The Flapper* was the use of clothing to symbolize freedom and also critiqued class. Loose fitting fashion was as symbolic as it was comfortable; it visibly demonstrated women’s liberation from the restrictive Victorian-style corset.³¹ In the same manner, it was a rebellion against

³⁰ The crisis in masculinity would help explain the rise of boxing from its lower-class roots to becoming the preeminent sport in North America and the ushering in of the “Golden Age of Boxing.” This would be similar to Gail Bederman’s argument for a crisis in white masculinity, epitomized by the James J. Jeffries versus Jack Johnson fight a decade earlier that pitted the older retired champion and “Great White Hope” Jeffries against the current champion, African American Johnson. Johnson won, which led to white people rioting against jubilant blacks. See Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 1-5.

³¹ Helen Lowry, “As the Debutante Tells It: More about Mrs. Grundy and Miss 1921,” *New York Times*, January 30, 1921; Estelle B. Freedman, “The New Woman: Changing views of Women in the 1920s,” *The Journal of American History* 61 (September 1974), 372–93.

predominantly middle-class Victorian morals and ideals.³² In *The Flapper*, Mary Alden Hopkins asked: “Have you noticed how slightly women’s clothing has changed in the past five years?” Hopkins statement was directed toward elitism and class consciousness built around conspicuous consumption by elites, especially those who employed fashion as a status symbol. This can also be seen when a Muncie, Indiana, shopkeeper showed his annoyance with the newer styles. He declared that he “used to be able to tell something about the background of a girl applying for a job as a stenographer by her clothes” but due to their dress he has “to wait till she speaks, shows a gold tooth, or otherwise gives me a second clue.”³³ In essence, the elites of the past established and reaffirmed class divisions and status markers by following current fashion trends; adhering to the flapper aesthetic disrupted fashion as a demarcation of class.

Hopkins’ article further situated itself against people who used fashion as a symbol of class and those who used it to fight for freedom. She argued “costumers, corsetieres, and fabric manufacturers realize it with frantic concern. They are doing their best to turn women back into the former restless search for beauty amid wasp waists, balloon skirts, trains and draperies.”³⁴ This indictment of the elites and the fashion industry implied that the flappers were concerned with freedom and class consciousness. It also showed a desire to eliminate the control of women’s fashion from the titans of the fashion industry. These sentiments were echoed by economist and social critic, Stuart Chase, as he observed that there was democratization of fashion and “only a connoisseur can distinguish Miss Astorbilt on Fifth Avenue and from her father’s stenographer or secretary.” In addition, a Polish immigrant noticed that in the U.S., “class distinctions have all but disappeared. To the casual observer all American women dress alike.”³⁵ Hopkins continued by explaining that the flapper made women free to “wear what she likes within the broadest range ever yet allowed her. Big sleeves, little sleeves, long sleeves, short sleeves and no sleeves at all, were all equally ‘in’ during the vogue of the slit sleeve. Large hats can’t drive out small hats; and vice versa. It is difficult, nowadays, to be actually out of style!” Hopkins then explained that this would be “a serious condition for women’s wear manufacturers.”³⁶ Hopkins insisted that the Modern Girl was free

³² Yellis, “Prosperity’s Child,” 474.

³³ Lynd and Lynd, *Middletown*, 161.

³⁴ Mary Alden Hopkins, “Woman’s Rebellion Against Fashions,” *The New Republic*, August 16, 1922.

³⁵ Zeitz, *Flapper*, 170.

³⁶ Hopkins, “Woman’s Rebellion Against Fashions,” *The New Republic*, August 16, 1922.

from the fashion industry and flappers served as an example that freedom was obtainable for all women.

The Flapper also contended that flapper attire was not only appropriate, but beneficial. Thus the rebellion against Victorian fashions and ideals were not just symbolic, but also pragmatic. In the article, “Hats off to the Flapper,” the author declared that, “legs are made to walk with, and therefore we are heart and souls behind the sensible American girls who insist on freedom in movement before anything else.”³⁷ In many ways, flappers sought an androgynous look with bobbed hair, straight waists and indiscernible breasts, all the while maintaining a tantalizing and beguiling fashion aesthetic that exposed more flesh than the previous generation.³⁸ This can be seen in the humorous poem, “The Psychology of Knees,” in which *The Flapper* declared that people will get used to seeing the exposed knee, but seeing “the first hundred knees are the hardest. After that you get callous. So do they.”³⁹ In another article, after decrying people who call flappers “senseless,” they observed that several medical doctors’ believed that short skirts were more “sanitary because they prevent the germ carrying that a long skirt inspires.”⁴⁰

Eve, the First Flapper Woman

In another *The Flapper* article, Myrtle Heileman praised flappers as, “the most sensible thing since Eve. She wears rolled sox and why shouldn't she? They are extremely cool and comfortable. Her toddle pumps are fairly low-heeled and she doesn't try to squeeze into a Cinderella.” Heileman explained that for flappers’, “bobbed hair is cool, sensible, and sanitary, and it has nothing to do with her brain.” Heileman also argued that flappers do respect and obey their parents “just as well as her grandmother” but “has common sense” to know when “to use her own judgment and exercise her own authority.”⁴¹ The use of the word, “sensible,” indicates that these flappers, and their supporters, were responding to critics of the flapper aesthetic and this flouting of convention was in response to practical concerns. As noted flapper actress Colleen Moore stated that flappers wore clothing “out of a sense of mischief—because she thinks them rather ‘smart’ and naughty” and that the flapper “likes her freedom.”⁴² These arguments also harkens back to organizations like the Rational Dress Society (1881) and the Bohemian Movement in Pre-

³⁷ “Hats off to the Flapper.” *The Flapper*, November, 1922.

³⁸ “Flapper Manifesto,” *Vanity Fair*, June 1921.

³⁹ “The Psychology of Knees,” *The Flapper*, June, 1922.

⁴⁰ “Flappers Protest Dictation From Paris,” *The Flapper*, September, 1922.

⁴¹ Myrtle Heileman, “The Modern Riddle,” *The Flapper*, November, 1922.

⁴² Gladys Hall, “Flappers Here to Stay, Says Colleen Moore,” *The Flapper*, November, 1922.

war Greenwich Village whose members argued against the corset for varying reason, thus linking these flappers to other reformers.

Similar positions were taken by supporters of flappers, which may demonstrate that the flappers' contentions may have impacted influential members of society. The head of the Chicago Department of Health, Dr. Lee A. Stone, addressed a health conference audience by stating "flapperism—or modern feminism—is just the revolt of youth." He also added that the a flapper was just "a female who has lived down thousands of years of hypocrisy and now has become what she most desired to be for ages, a human being."⁴³ Dr. Bradley Martin made similar statements when he contended, "girls of today, the so-called flappers, are more honest in their attitude toward life than their mothers were and much more honest than their grandmothers dared to be," but clarified that he did, in no way, "contend that the flapper has not done things which deserve censure." Martin concluded his statements by saying that flappers, "indubitably exaggerated sex to some extent. Her language and her actions have not been without unnecessary crudities." He then stated "her honesty is cruel, frequently, and she has too little regard for parental guidance."⁴⁴ The key thing with Martin's qualifying statements was that he did not renounce the flapper and her behavior, but claimed that she only needed some guidance. These individuals, who were also typically excluded from the historical dialogue, lend credence to the claims articulated in *The Flapper* and their self-defense.

Another common argument against flappers, offered by antimodernist groups, was that they were swayed by outside influences, but these arguments did not go unchecked. In one article, the author asked, "will Paris succeed in imposing long skirts on the flappers of America?" to which the magazine replied with an emphatic, "no [if flappers] have their way!" The article went on to say that flappers will not easily give up the short skirt, "for American flappers may be fickle, but they know a good thing when they see it."⁴⁵ In another *The Flapper* article, an unknown author argued, "the flappers have rebelled—and by the act of rebellion they have not only justified their existence but insured their survival." The anonymous

⁴³ "Flappers 'Merely Humans': Females Who Have Lived Down Hypocrisy, Says Chicago Doctor," *New York Times*, March 17, 1922.

⁴⁴ "Defends Honest Flappers: Bradley Martin Says They Have Taken A Great Step Forward," *New York Times*, December 17, 1926.

⁴⁵ "Flappers Protest Dictation From Paris," *The Flapper*, September, 1922.

correspondent went on to assure the public that flappers, “have hurled the gauntlet in the face of the Parisian dictators of style and declared that from now on they are going to use their own minds in matters of dress, at least. And that means that they are going to use their own minds in all matters that concern their own welfare.”⁴⁶ Another article ended by arguing that American flappers should “show the world that flappers are real Americans and will not let Paris dictate the fashions for them any longer.” Then it forcefully asked “isn't America big enough and fine enough to dictate its own fashions?”⁴⁷

These statements, although they reflect the growing isolationism in the United States during the 1920s, do not dismiss the cosmopolitan nature of the flapper. Nor does it undermine flapper's use of consumption as a tool of agency. The statements were directed at Parisian fashion designers, so while this could be viewed as undercutting capitalism, it was actually reinforcing consumption's power to give autonomy. Consumption can only be used to subdue class markers if its control was dictated by the consumer, and not the producer elites. The claiming of being truly American was *The Flapper's* way of asserting their vision of American identity against other competing visions. In its unique way, *The Flapper* indirectly asserted that there was power in consumption and their belief was that consumption was a sign of an American cosmopolitan modernity. Although their claims were contentious, it also demonstrated that flappers claimed an American identity, even if it was markedly different than most peoples' beliefs concerning Americanism at the time.

The Flapper as Historical Activist Women

The Flapper, and other periodicals defending flappers, often compared flappers to other women who made significant contributions in history. The most common recurring characters were Eve, who “didn't have as much common sense as the modern girl” and was “vamped by the snake in the garden.”⁴⁸ The term “vamp” derives from the word vampire and suggests seduction and eroticism. Vamp was also one of the first names for a flapper, epitomized by the silent films of Theda Bara, which are now largely

⁴⁶ “Hats off to the Flapper,” *The Flapper*, November, 1922.

⁴⁷ “Flappers Protest Dictation From Paris,” *The Flapper*, September, 1922.

⁴⁸ June LaVerne, “Flappers Flapped in Grandmother's Time,” *The Flapper*, June, 1922; Heileman, “The Modern Riddle,” *The Flapper*, November, 1922.

lost.⁴⁹ The use of Eve as an early flapper and vamp was intriguing, as Roman Catholics and Evangelicals both argued criticized Flappers. Pope Benedict XV denounced “the present immodesty and extravagance in women's dress,” while the Archbishop of the Ohio diocese decried against “bare female shoulders.”⁵⁰ Protestant Addie M. Harris, in a religious book directed toward proper decorum for women, asked how does a “women or girl look like walking down the street with her dress to her knees or above, and how does she appear when she seats herself?” She concluded her analysis by asking once again, “who does not like to see a woman clad in a lovely and becoming dress? Such as dress would be at least four to six inches below the knees, with the arms nicely covered or draped with sleeves.”⁵¹

While Eve was prominently mentioned as a flapper, other female historical figures were mentioned as “proto-flappers.” Unsurprisingly, Cleopatra, the last leader of Ptolemaic Egypt was declared a flapper. Flapper authors took note of, “her gorgeous assortment of perfumes, wild animal pets and poisons,” declaring her, “the stellar flapper in History [... and her] use of beautifying cosmetics has been in vogue since Cleopatra vamped the Roman emperor.”⁵² Myrtle Heileman wrote, “Cleopatra was a flapper, and she used exactly the same methods as we have today to vamp Antony, Caesar, and all the rest that strolled the Appian way.” Interestingly, the depiction of Cleopatra as a flapper could have worked to reinforce negative stereotypes of flappers. Heileman contended that, “Joan of Arc was a flapper.” She made this claim because Joan “knew what she wanted to do. She wanted to wear armor and ride a charging steed as much as any girl nowadays wants to wear knickers and ride in a flashy roadster. She wanted to lead an army of men, and she did it.” Florence Nightingale was a flapper, according to Heileman, because she “gave up her home life and entered the ranks as a nurse” during the Crimean War. Heileman concluded her piece by stating “most of the great women belonged to that class, more or less, and all of them had the ‘I will,’ the ‘Go to it’ spirit that Miss America displays today.”⁵³ The mentioning of Joan of Arc and Florence Nightingale was an appeal to their respective autonomy during their lives and this autonomy was political and transnational in nature. This perspective places the Modern Girl within

⁴⁹ Sara Ross, “‘Good Little Bad Girls’: Controversy and the Flapper Comedienne,” *Film History* 13 (2001), 409, 414-415, 421; Maurer, “Language and the Sex Revolution,” 11.

⁵⁰ “Fearing the Flappers: Is the Younger Generation in Peril?” *The Literary Digest*, May 14, 1921.

⁵¹ Addie M. Harris, *Above Rubies or What a Girl Should Prize* (Elkhart: Bethel Publishing Company, reprinted 1931), 42-44.

⁵² LaVerne, “Flappers Flapped In Grandmother's Time,” *The Flapper*, June, 1922.

⁵³ Heileman, “The Modern Riddle,” *The Flapper*, November, 1922.

the political realm, an area that the flappers, at least implicitly, were accused of ignoring in favor of practicing frivolity. While this article was laden with sarcasm, the use of historical figures and the implication that they were flappers imagines a historical line of female subversion that leads up to the flappers. In addition, it also shows that female subversion can take different appearances and run through several different avenues. Consequently, these historical comparisons allowed the flapper to take her rightful place within history, in a long line of subversive women.

Heileman's statements seem to be directed toward people who were involved in the New Woman Movement, but who rejected the pleasure-seeking behavior and apparent excesses of the flapper generation. While not all women of the previous era supported prohibition, many did, and alcohol consumption was a vice and a criminal act that many flappers openly violated.⁵⁴ New Woman, social worker, and civil rights activist Jane Addams, also from Chicago, became unsettled by the younger generation's "astounding emphasis on sex," and that they had "gone back to liberty for the individual" and consequently mourned that they had lost their "reforming energy."⁵⁵ Addams' concern was that American society was becoming more individualistic, something she fought against during her entire career as an activist. Addams and her sympathizers, however, seemed not to recognize that the flapper style, much like the female reformers who criticized the New Women, was also a form of subversion. At the very least, Addams was concerned that individualistic subversion as the wrong form of subversion.

The Flapper as Militant

While most political action by flappers was more covert and analytical in nature, *The Flapper* did publish pieces that were overt in their politics. In an interview, Mary McDowell, the newly appointed Commissioner of Public Affairs in Chicago, argued that flappers' "tendencies are in the right direction."⁵⁶ This piece was clearly political and demonstrated to readers' common civil problems with potential governmental solutions. Another article stated that police officers would serve society better if they were to

⁵⁴ "Fearing the Flappers: Is the Young Generation in Peril?" *Literary Digest*, May 14, 1921; Boyer Sagart, *Flapper*, 16.

⁵⁵ Jane Addams quoted in Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 315-316.

⁵⁶ Thomas Levis, "Woman Takes Her Place by the Side of Man: An Interview with Mary McDowell," *The Flapper*, June, 1923.

act as social workers.⁵⁷ *The Flapper* also published extensive interviews with people who claimed to be flappers and worked on prison reform and promoted college attendance for women.⁵⁸ In a similar article, the Chicago Health Commissioner Dr. H.N. Bundesen promoted STD awareness. He declared in the magazine that every “flapper should not only request, but DEMAND” that their future husbands have a verifiable “medical certificate of good health.”⁵⁹ He noted that as “a general rule flappers take good care of themselves,” and that the “double standard of morals is all wrong.” “Men who require their” partners to “have led virtuous lives” stated Bundesen “should see to it that they themselves meet the standard they” demand. He then went on to explain that with the help of several church leaders, he was successful in convincing the Chicago Board of Education to teach “sex hygiene.” At the end of the article, Bundesen appealed to all flappers to help solve this problem in America. *The Flapper’s* interviews with both Commissioner of Public Affairs Mary McDowell and Chicago Health Commissioner Dr. H.N. Bundesen were in line with both earlier and contemporary women’s activists who were part of the social hygiene and the clean-city movements. The social hygiene movement started in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and these Progressive Era reformers wanted to regulate prostitution and vice, and to help eliminate venereal disease through sexual education. The publishing of these people within *The Flapper* demonstrated a continuation of thought and practice between some flappers and the New Woman.

Since women received the right to vote just a few years before, politicians sought out *The Flapper* as an opportunity to gain votes. As a result, *The Flapper* asked a simple question: “should flappers take part in politics?” and then proceeded to let the mayoral candidates answer it.⁶⁰ Democrat William E. Dever, the eventual winner, ran on a platform that encouraged reform. This was particularly appealing considering the amount of corruption that was apparently prevalent under the previous administration. Dever argued that flappers and other women participating in politics would clean up the government. “Not only flappers, but all womankind, should participate in the arena of politics,” declared Dever. “After all, if good and tried housekeeping methods were applied to the science of government, there would be fewer graft, waste and

⁵⁷ “Turn Police into Social Workers: Sgt Thomas Ryan Tells ‘Experience’ How Kind Words Will Stop Crime,” *Experience*, October 1923.

⁵⁸ Uthai Vincent Wilcox, “An Executive at 16! How Flapper made Good—Prison Relief Work,” *Experience*, September 1923; Jean Burton, “The Value of a College Education,” *The Flapper*, May, 1923.

⁵⁹ “Is He Fit to Marry You?,” *The Flapper*, April, 1923.

⁶⁰ “Should Flappers Take Part in ‘Politics?’ By Chicago’s Mayoralty Candidates,” *The Flapper*, April, 1923.

inefficiency scandals filling the newspapers and clogging the courts.”⁶¹ Dever’s argument for women to vote was nearly identical to claims that suffragists made during their push for the 19th Amendment. Arthur C. Lueder, the Republican candidate, used tactics that seemed to be based on flattery: “The ‘flapper’ is a most important factor in politics and will continue to become a more and more important factor...” He continued on, “the whole world is for the ‘flapper’—they are the objects of universal admiration for their snappiness, happy-go-lucky ways, their political conclusions will be valuable, as in this respect their decisions are of as much importance as their grandmothers.”⁶² Socialist candidate William A. Cunnea employed language that would have been particularly influential for readers of *The Flapper*, which employed similar language. In it, he urged flappers to vote and stop the “small-skulled, hard-faced, frozen-hearted elderly ladies and gentlemen.” The language Cunnea employed was rather loaded, and clearly indicated that he felt the older critics and their critiques of flappers were uninformed, unfounded, and unfeeling. Cunnea then unabashedly stated that he was “out for the flapper votes” and he did not “care who knows it.”⁶³ *The Flapper* interviewed all the leading candidates running for mayor, not only major party candidates, but also the Socialist candidate, a few years after the First Red Scare. The Socialist candidate’s inclusion was fascinating at a time of contentious, competing views of what it meant to be an American, and could possibly mean that he received some support from the magazine’s subscribers. In addition, *The Flapper*’s desire to be engaged in politics in this manner belies the “frivolous” caricature of the flapper.

The Flapper also gave a platform to the National Woman’s Party (NWP) and their attempts to pass the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). In the middle of section that contained political jokes and satire, a weapon of the weak just as much as gossip or feigned ignorance, contained a small paragraph about a “15-year-old girl who represented flapper’s interests” at a NWP convention. The caption reads:

It was not a social call that some 80 or more women members of the party paid. They came to discuss seriously ways and means of getting their rights, other than just the ballot. No more subjection under man-made laws for them, and they are giving the men fair warning—it will be pitched battle from beginning to end it is the purpose of the party to have passed in every state a blanket law which will do away with sex discrimination and make all citizens of the U.S. equal in

⁶¹ William E. Dever, “Should Flappers Take Part in ‘Politics?’ By Chicago’s Mayoralty Candidates,” *The Flapper*, April, 1923.

⁶² Arthur C. Lueder, “Should Flappers Take Part in ‘Politics?’ By Chicago’s Mayoralty Candidates,” *The Flapper*, April, 1923.

⁶³ William A. Cunnea, “Should Flappers Take Part in ‘Politics?’ By Chicago’s Mayoralty Candidates,” *The Flapper*, April, 1923.

the courts of justice.⁶⁴

Even the magazine's willingness to mention, let alone publish, something that supports the NWP and the ERA was fascinating, as feminists during this time were heavily divided over it. This debate among feminist was the reason for the written debate over the ERA in *The Nation*. On one side was NWP Chairwomen Elsie Hill and labor activist and NAACP co-founder Florence Kelley, who argued that the ERA "recklessly imperils the special laws for women as such, for wives, for mothers, and for wage-earners."⁶⁵

Support for the NWP continued after the magazine changed its name to *Experience*. In October 1923, it printed an article called "The Woman's Party and the Modern Girl" by Carol Rehfisch, a leader of the California branch of the NWP. She started her piece by arguing that "While it is impossible for every feminist to be a flapper, it is entirely proper for every flapper to be a feminist" and then writes a lively and spirited defense of the 1923 ERA.⁶⁶ The following month, it published a lengthy interview with NWP founder, Alice Paul.⁶⁷ According to the Paul article, she was "keenly interest in the young people." It went on to say that she has an "untiring faith in what flappers could do if given the opportunity of serving hand in hand with the older members of the organization." The article concluded by saying that at every NWP rally, proudly right behind the banner, was a flapper. This, and other individualist articles in *The Flapper*, seems to be an early example of "the personal is political." It also demonstrated that there were strong continuities in thoughts and beliefs between flappers and their New Woman predecessors as a continuation of the thought that all people should be treated with equal opportunities.

Further continuity between flappers and earlier activists was the coalition and organization building that characterized club activities. *The Flapper* sought to create a network of flappers, called Flapper Flocks, because, as they declared, "In Union There is Strength."⁶⁸ The Flapper Flocks had their own designated sections called "News of the Flapper Flocks," which reported group activities and announcing when new chapters were formed. This would help create unity among flappers and to some

⁶⁴ "Politicklers," *The Flapper*, November, 1922. Jokes in this section included: "Harding is the gent that put onus in the bonus" and "All the vets got out of the bonus was the bone." Another one discussed issues that would have been influenced by prevailing Americanism: "Patriotism cannot be measured in dollars, but the bonus is a matter of sense."

⁶⁵ Elsie Hill and Florence Kelley, "Should Women Be Equal Before the Law," *The Nation*, April 12, 1922.

⁶⁶ Carol Rehfisch, "The Woman's Party and the Modern Girl," *Experience*, October 1923.

⁶⁷ Viola M'Keon, "My Most Impressive Experience by Alice Paul," *Experience*, December 1923.

⁶⁸ "News of the Flapper Flocks," *The Flapper*, December 1922.

degree her international counterparts. Women's clubs sought things other than literacy and work safety; they also provided soft benefits such as comradery, purpose, and a sense of belonging. This was what the Flapper Flocks intended to achieve throughout the nation. It also allowed flappers across the country to unite to achieve a common goal. Another purpose of these groups was helping foster healthy flapper lifestyles. "One reason for forming Flapper Flocks," according to *The Flapper* was for "the opportunity they afford to engage in athletic as well as social community events."⁶⁹ The Flapper Flocks served in a capacity to mobilize for potential political agitation as well as produce friendship and unity.

One section of "News of the Flapper Flocks" was telling of the time. While voting to establish a National Flapper Flock President, the magazine employed images of the KKK to demonstrate the seriousness of the position and what was at stake [see Figure 2]. In the image, the Klan was shown sneaking into a room labeled "your flock." The second image showed the leader of the Klan asking "who is she?" referring to the Flapper Flock President, while other Klansmen were holding her supine with open, shackled legs, while pouring ink down her throat. This symbolically shows the power of the flapper flocks, as it demonstrated *The Flapper's* and the Flapper Flocks potentially disruptive voices. Meanwhile, another member of the Klan was shown running off with the flapper flock votes, and another one wrote down the names of the flapper flock's role. In the bottom corner, was a picture of a hanging jacket with the caption "until your vote is in, the question is hung up." The style of the image though, was unmistakably indicative of a lynching. Clearly, *The Flapper* realized that the Klan and its agenda conflicted with their values, and they were not afraid to confront it to make a point. This unquestionable challenged the political anti-modernist rhetoric of the KKK.

It should be noted that the 1920s Klan was markedly different than other versions of the Klan, both before and after the decade. It has been variously called "a reaction of urban, white middle-class Protestants to their changing world, with its main membership motivated by fear rather than hate," or "a Protestant defense league" of "ordinary white Protestants" and that its demise came from "the opposition of rival ethnic groups."⁷⁰ Others have referred to it as "a kind of interest group for average white Protestants who

⁶⁹ "Girls! Take Part in Sports," *The Flapper*, March 1923.

⁷⁰ Emily Parker, "'Night Shirt Nights' in the City: The Ku Klux Klan in 1920s Worcester, Massachusetts," *New England Journal of History* 66 (Fall, 2009): 75; William D. Jenkins, *Steel Valley Klan: The Ku Klux Klan in Ohio's Mahoning Valley* (Kent, OH:

believed that their values should be dominant in their community” and claimed to defend “traditional moral standards against the seductive allurements of modern society.”⁷¹ Still yet, some scholars have concluded that the Klan “was more of a civic exponent of white Protestant social values than a repressive hate group.”⁷² This understanding of the Klan concludes that it was based on more than just racial animus, but people concerned with their changing roles within society and changes within society as a whole.

With the current historiography in mind, the image contained a deeper meaning, and the “statement” behind the image was both simple and profound. As the Klan sought to enforce certain governance over and the “proper” use of the female body, the body became a site of protest. As the image depicts a sexual assault, which has been used as a scare tactic, as well as imagery that has been used to demonize, it demonstrated that women’s bodies served as actual physical locations of revolution and defiance. Using imagery that not only portrayed women as vulnerable but also brought up familiar accusations against Germans during WWI, the image subverted the Klan’s use of violence as just and their roles as a punitive authority. If women were viewed as gentle and genial, essentially nonthreatening, this portrayal of violence against feminine bodies would be especially effective as protest. Therefore, since the Klan espoused moral superiority, the image of the sexual assault and the lynching of an innocent woman validated already existing beliefs in *The Flapper* that women’s bodies were sites of rebellion and could subvert established order; an unequivocal political statement, one that was stressed throughout *The Flapper*.

Conclusion

It was not unusual for articles in *The Flapper* to end with either optimism for the agency of the Modern Girl or with a cautionary tale for their critics. One article declared “if you’re crushing the flapper, remember that you’re crushing that spirit.” Other similar conclusions included statements suggesting, “[flappers are] self-reliant, bright, snappy and REAL,” undeserving of denunciation, or “all this criticism of

The Kent State University Press, 1990), 88, 94, 114; Stanley Coben, “Ordinary White Protestants: The KKK of the 1920s” (*Journal of Social History* 28, Fall 1994): 155-156.

⁷¹ Leonard Moore, *Citizen Klansmen: The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1921-1928* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 188; Kathleen Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 70).

⁷² Thomas Pegram, *One hundred percent American: the Rebirth and Decline of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), 225.

flappers is bunk and should be treated lightly.”⁷³ These statements emphasized that flappers sought liberty, and that some liberties could be hindered by unfounded critiques. Ending articles about flappers in this manner also demonstrated a degree of defensiveness. These passages were not written by people who were aggressively forcing their morals and styles upon everyone, but rather those seeking to explore themselves and the larger world around them in a manner of their choosing. These articles ending with such passionate defenses were evidence that the flappers were being challenged, but the challenge was not going unchecked.

Political elements contained in *The Flapper*, whether overt or covert, demonstrated at least one of two things. Either the magazine cared less for what flappers actually wanted and for its own profits in an effort to push its agenda, or there were flappers who cared about these reforms. Pushing an agenda on a targeted audience could easily spell doom for any magazine. In other words, a magazine that restricted their potential distribution by promoting itself to a limited demographic must be keenly aware of what its audience desired to maintain their consumers. So while most of the discourse in *The Flapper* was clandestinely political, overt political activity were present. This most notably can be seen in the attempt to unite flocks as an organization to agitate for desirable goals or in the interviews of politicians and political activists. References to Americanism as outlined earlier was further proof that the flappers, at least those that subscribe to *The Flapper* and its successors, were declaring their own version of Americanism, one that conflicted with the Klan. The emphasis on flappers being “true Americans” was another indication that they had a competing vision of what it meant to be an American than their critics.⁷⁴ The American Modern Girl, the flapper, rebelled against how women should behave in the public sphere, fighting the same battle as the New Woman did, but in a different arena. While being more fashion conscious than her predecessor, the flapper continued some of the reform activism and methods of the New Woman, suffragists, and clubwomen. In addition, the Modern Girl contested the double standard that men were allowed to seek a certain degree of pleasure but women should only seek to better themselves. In this manner, the Modern Girl was a natural extension of the larger New Women Movement.

⁷³ “The New Old Fashioned Girl,” *The Flapper*, June 1922; Heileman, “The Modern Riddle,” *The Flapper*, November, 1922; Marie LaVerne, “Flappers Flapped in Grandmother’s time,” *The Flapper*, June, 1922.

⁷⁴ See footnotes 1, 37, 39, 46 and 48 along with the corresponding paragraphs in this section.

Chapter 3

“All the sleeping women, Are now awake and moving”:

The *Modeng Xiaojie* and *Moga* as Symbols of Modernity

In this chapter, there are two underlying arguments. The first is that the Chinese and Japanese Modern Girl, like the earlier and contemporary New Woman, was subversive, an agent of change who actively resisted gendered norms. The second is that she did this primarily through her use of the emerging transnational consumer culture that helped create the Modern Girl as a social group. The Modern Girl accomplished this by shaping the spaces, products, and media that made women visible in particular ways during this time. In this manner, the Modern Girl was a genuine extension of the larger New Woman movement during the *fin de siècle*. The key to understanding the Modern Girl in East Asia is realizing that transnational and local influences worked in tandem, rather than merely through imperialistic domination. Unlike the previous chapter which primarily used one periodical, for East Asia multiple sources will be employed including poetry, magazines, and Republican Chinese and Japanese authors. This chapter will look at depictions of the *modeng xiaojie* and the *moga* and explore them through differing motifs: autonomy, public spaces, and identity, including national, regional, and subcultural identities.

The Chinese *modeng xiaojie* and the Japanese *moga* emerged in their respective countries during a time of rapid change. Starting in the mid-1880s through the 1920s, political and social unrest remained constant with both peasants and women fighting for more rights. The Chinese and Japanese names for the Modern Girl “*Modeng xiaojie*” and “*moga*” shortened from “*modan galu*” were based off of English and highlighted their critics claim that East Asian Modern Girls were enthralled with the West. They were often, like the American counterparts, labeled as predominately frivolous. Contrary to these claims, the Modern Girl fought against the vicious double standard that single men were allowed to seek a certain degree of pleasure, but women should only seek to better themselves as daughters and mothers.

Until recently, historians and other scholars studying China and Japan have neglected the Modern Girls and her stereotypical depictions, while the New Woman was viewed as a “canonical figure” worthy

of scholarship.¹ These scholars take various stances on how the Modern Girl developed, and why at the turn of the 20th century some women turned to commercialism and “frivolity.” Some argued it was a strictly Western import, whereas others detailed how the Modern Girl challenged traditional gender and class distinctions. Meanwhile, other scholars’ focused on the interplay of various cultures which created a thoroughly cosmopolitan Modern Girl. According to scholar Martha Huang, male elites chose to demonstrate their power by bestowing newfound freedoms upon the lives of women. Thus it was through the entwining nature of fashion, politics, and gender that new dress styles became available to women, which were “conceived, expressed, and even embodied, by men.”² Sarah Stevens has explored the changing gender dynamic during the Republican Era of modern China. She argued that the Modern Girl represented Western culture by emphasizing that the use of English by the Chinese Modern Girls “highlighted [its] cosmopolitan nature.” In addition, the “inclusion of English within a Chinese text [...] served as an immediate visual marker of a text’s connection to modernity.”³ This view of modernity, however, requires an outside Western influence to be deemed modern.

Some other scholars contended that the stereotypes and prejudices of the Modern Girl stem more from class struggle than pure anti-colonialism. Historian Madeleine Dong argued that the blurring of class distinction was the root cause of the fear of the *modeng xiaojie* and much of this disdain centered on elites seeking to maintain modernity as a class-based privilege.⁴ The disruption of class distinction involved the inability to visibly determine whether a young woman came from a reputable family, and served as an excuse for conservatives to remove hard-fought social reforms. Dong stated that the, “colonial worship of things foreign had a strong impact on the modernity of the Chinese Modern Girl.” The key to understanding Dong’s argument was that these “Western” traits were thought to be the exclusive rights of

¹ Sarah E. Stevens, “Figuring Modernity: The New Woman and the Modern Girl in Republican China,” *NWSA Journal* 15 no. 3 (Fall 2003): 88, 90.

² Martha Huang, “A Woman has so Many Parts to Her Body, Life is Hard Indeed,” in *China Chic: East Meets West*, ed. Valerie Steele and John S. Major (Yale University Press, 1999), 139.

³ Stevens, “Figuring Modernity,” 84-85.

⁴ Madeleine Dong, “Who is Afraid of the Chinese Modern Girl?,” in *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization*, ed. Alys Eve Weinbaum et al (Durham: NC, Duke University Press, 2008), 195.

elites, not the common person. The Modern Girl look was obtainable, “with promises of class mobility that advertisers frequently used to sell products.”⁵

Relatedly other scholars argued the Modern Girl was a transnational phenomenon, but one that contained strong elements of the native culture while maintaining agency. The Modern Girl Around the World Research Group, based at Washington University, maintained that the “near simultaneous appearances of Modern Girls around the world complicates widely accepted histories of commercial capitalism, consumption, and visual culture.” It also obfuscated the assumption of a very “lineal dissemination of ‘modernity’” from Western societies.⁶ Literary scholar Christopher Rosenmeier argued that in Chinese author Shi Zhecun's short stories, which illustrated widespread misconceptions of the Modern Girl, and the belief that modern women began as a “symbol of female emancipation” and then became “a popular icon of glamour and leisure.” Meanwhile, the older New Woman and the Modern Girl became “competing visions of modernity” and a “contested symbol that remained in flux.”⁷ Thus the New Woman in the form of the *xianyuan* (good wife, wise mother) was virtuous and understood her class and societal role as she pursued “proper” reform, while the Modern Girl disrupted established order. This situates the *modeng xiaojie* as a successor of the *xianyuan* reformers who appeared during the fin de siècle.

Self-Fashion and Identity in China and Japan

Self-fashion and identity as a theme ran throughout the interwar literature of China and Japan and is vital to understanding the East Asian Modern Girl and her contemporary environment. The Modern Girl came into being in a world which contained, if not sustained, a strong chauvinistic and nationalistic political milieu. Fascism was on the rise in Europe, and the Japanese variant was growing in stature. Meanwhile, the United States and other industrialized nations were slowing immigration and seeking policies to expedite the assimilation of immigrants into the dominant culture. It was a world of clashing cultures, where various new political and societal ideas collided with a traditional order.

⁵ Modern Girl Around the World Research Group, “The Modern Girl Around the World: A Research Agenda and Preliminary Findings,” *Gender & History* 17, no. 2 (August 2005): 287.

⁶ Alys Eve Weinbaum et al, “The Modern Girl as Heuristic Device,” 3, 12-13.

⁷ Christopher Rosenmeier, “Women Stereotypes in Shi Zhecun's Short Stories,” *Modern China* 37 (January 2011): 48, 65.

A key to understanding the transnational identity of the East Asian Modern Girl is to understand the events occurring in Shanghai and Tokyo. Residents of Shanghai had been bestowed numerous advantages because they were living in a port city with colonial concessions, which allowed Shanghai citizens access “to participate in an imagined community of world literature.”⁸ During this time, Paris was less “diversified and cosmopolitan than Shanghai, and more monolithic in architecture.”⁹ In spite of Shanghai’s writers’ fascination with Western literature, their reality and their work was situated within a cosmopolitan Shanghai that would have been more Chinese than Western. Shanghai contained countless persons of “foreign descent,” including a large number of Russians escaping the October Revolution, or “floating” subjects of China. New department stores, cinemas, coffee houses, dance halls, and other urban places created a new kind of “public place” for the new urban culture, one that could accommodate all ethnicities.¹⁰

A noteworthy example of this cosmopolitan and transnational trajectory was the development and rise of jazz within China. With the introduction of the gramophone, which had, “travelled roughly at the speed of the steamships that plied colonial trade routes,” Chinese composers, like Li Jinhui, could create “Sinified jazz,” a fusion of African American jazz and traditional Chinese folk melodies.¹¹ In addition, African American jazz musician Buck Clayton’s ability to transcribe and play Chinese music served as evidence that “Chinese music (had) entered into a relationship of commensurability with that of the West.”¹² Transnational jazz demonstrates the intermixing of cultures that took place during the early twentieth century, which was fundamental to understanding the Modern Girl and her various appearances throughout the world. Li’s fusion of African American Jazz and traditional Chinese folk melodies avoids the “neat binary division between elite literary production and the domain of popular media culture” by

⁸ Lee, *Shanghai Modern*, 35-37.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Zhang Zhen, *Amorous History of the Silver Screen* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 52; Lee, *Shanghai Modern*, 42.

¹¹ Andrew F. Jones, *Yellow Music: Media Culture and Colonial Modernity in the Chinese Jazz Age* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 11.

¹² Jones, *Yellow Music*, 20.

most scholars of modern Chinese cultural history.¹³ Sinified jazz provides as a clear and noteworthy example of the creolization of cultures that occurred in Shanghai during the early twentieth century.¹⁴

Chinese elites were originally the scholar-official class that gained power by way of a superficially meritocratic system. By the early modern period, however, economic elites consisting of wealthy merchants gained considerable clout. It should be noted that although the commercial elite arose in China long before there was a significant western presence, by the 1890s it was at least partially directed by Western imperial powers and Japan. So within China, although class and social structure influenced the New Women, they also utilized existing traditions of the *xianyuan* that promoted talent, knowledge, intellectual curiosity, and independence, coupled with the more Western notions of scientific knowledge. This combination produced resentment among some Chinese as these women became “Western.”¹⁵ Consequently, this created an environment with differing interpretations of modern, one that was accused of being “Western” and one that emphasized women’s roles in “differentiating between private and public responsibilities” or essentially a modernity that still contained separate spheres for men and women.¹⁶ Thus the idea of the Modern Girl as a *femme fatale* challenged the concept of “good wife, wise mother” as they were accused of preventing men and women from fulfilling their full societal roles.¹⁷ This can be seen in the writings of feminist Xue Shaohui, whose neo-Confucian followers felt that a proper modern women promoted and guarded “virtue, purified our minds, and cultivated our tenderness.”¹⁸ To the critics of Modern Girl, the stereotypes of the *xianyuan* and the Modern Girl could not have been more antipodal; one pushed for equal rights while critics argued that the other practiced frivolity.

Tokyo follows a similar plotline, not because it was a semi-colonial port city, but because its residents embraced, and even sought out, Western ideas and then dispersed them throughout the country. The Japanese love of foreign and domestic art forms, specifically movies and jazz, did not produce a new amalgamation of differing cultural practices, but allowed Japanese consumers to “switch codes” for

¹³ Jones, *Yellow Music*, 76.

¹⁴ Jones, *Yellow Music*, 74-76.

¹⁵ Qian, “Revitalizing the Xianyuan,” 402, 409-410, 423.

¹⁶ Qian, “Revitalizing the Xianyuan,” 424.

¹⁷ Stevens, “Figuring Modernity,” 82.

¹⁸ Qian, “Revitalizing the Xianyuan,” 424.

different events.¹⁹ After the Meiji Restoration, women in public “groups” became more prominent in Japan. These groups included the “new woman” (*atarashii onna*), the “working woman” (*shokugyo fujin*), the female student (*jogakusei*), the cafe waitress (*jokyu*), the housewife (*shiifu*), and the “modern girl” (*moga*).²⁰ In addition, the Great Kanto Earthquake dispersed modernization throughout Japan’s second cities as it forced people to leave Tokyo and settle, at least temporarily, in cities such as Osaka.²¹ China and Japan, at this time, were countries that contained urban and agrarian, as well as modern and traditional, identities that were sometimes in harmony, sometimes in conflict, with each other.

In Japan, unlike China, social status and economics were interconnected and co-dependent. Feudal Japanese society was anchored on a unique Neo-Confucian model based on heredity, believing that its emphasis on accountability and obligation would bring stability and order to Japanese society.²² Occupation was directly linked with social class and encompassed marriage and clothing, as well as an elitism so rigid that elites prayed for divine protection against being killed by non-elites.²³ The largest societal group was the peasantry, followed by artisans and merchants. On the fringes of society were pariah groups such as the *eta* and the *hinin*.²⁴ The rigid nature of the medieval Japanese society was outlawed during the Meiji Restoration, which reestablished the Emperor as the nominal ruler, banned the samurai and other class elements, and actively sought modernization. While the feudal class system was dismembered, class hierarchies and past prejudices continued, but there was an opening to new ideas, especially from the West.

Just as in the U.S., the gaining of individual autonomy and the search for identity were necessary for the Modern Girls to appear. Earlier women seeking more rights, often by arguing in ways and in public places that would have been unusual at the time, broke down certain barriers that would have prevented most of the more common characteristics of the East Asian Modern Girl. This was true regardless of

¹⁹ Silverberg, *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense*, 82-85.

²⁰ Gennifer Weisenfeld, “Selling Shiseido: Cosmetics Advertising & Design in Early 20th-Century Japan,” *MIT OpenCourseWare*, 8, accessed February 19, 2016, http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/shiseido_01/sh_essay01.html

²¹ Louise Young, *Beyond the Metropolis: Second Cities and Modern Life in Interwar Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 196-197.

²² Ian Neary, “Burakumin at the End of History,” *Social Research* 70 (2003), 269; James McClain, *Japan: A Modern History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002), 34, 78; S. Driver, *Japan* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 2008.), 1039.

²³ Yamaoto Tsunetomo, *Hagakure: The Book of the Samurai*, trans. W. Wilson (Kodansha: Tokyo, 1979), 154; Neary, “Burakumin,” 269.

²⁴ Neary, “Burakumin,” 278; McClain, *Japan: A Modern History*, 100.

whether or not they were blatantly exploited by advertisers and marketers. A good example of the Modern Girl seeking an identity was in Zhang Ailing (Eileen Chang) essay, “A Chronicle of Changing Clothes.” In the piece, Zhang discussed the emergence of the *qipao*, which originally a triangle shaped dress, possible for men, but became a form fitting in the 1920s and 1930s, as a national dress in China [see Figures 6, 9 and 10 for examples of the dress]. She argued, “[w]ith the establishment of unity between the various nationalities by the new republic, women all over the country suddenly began to wear the *qipao*—not because they wanted to show their loyalty to the Manchu Qing dynasty or their support for its restoration, but because they wanted to look like men.” Zhang continued, “[s]oured and angry, they sought to discard everything that smacked of femininity, even to the point of rejecting womanhood altogether. This was why the first *qipao* were angular and puritanical.”²⁵ While different from the desire to identify with the Shanghai intelligentsia, the goal of eliminating the gendered double standard was a fairly common theme during this time. It also bore witness to other Modern Girls who used cosmetics and fashion, most notably with the sleek, straight lined dresses and bobbed hair, which generated gender confusion.²⁶

Another issue raised by the Modern Girl and her fight against restrictive and gendered clothing stems from their rejection of traditional values and can be seen in Lu Xun’s short story “Regret for the Past.” In it, the description of the female protagonist’s clothing was strikingly Western, and included exposed “thin white arms, striped cotton blouse and black skirt.”²⁷ Toward the conclusion of the story, the narrator talked with the protagonist, Tzu-chun, about what they had once discussed together in better times: “I spoke of literature, then of foreign authors and their works, of Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* and *The Lady from the Sea*. I praised Nora for being strong-minded [...]”²⁸ The mentioning of Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen’s, *A Doll’s House* was vital to the account and suggests the convictions and beliefs of the couple. In *A Doll’s House*, Nora abandons her husband and children in an effort to discover herself, and the narrator’s praise of Nora’s actions most likely resulted in Tzu-chun leaving him, which was his intention. In addition,

²⁵ Ailing Zhang, “A Chronicle of Changing Clothes,” trans. Andrew F. Jones, *Positions: East Asia Culture Critique* 11 no. 2 (Fall 2003): 435.

²⁶ Alys Eve Weinbaum et al, “The Modern Girl as Heuristic Device,” 1, 11.

²⁷ Lu Hsun (Lu Xun), “Regret for the Past,” in *Selected Short Stories of Lu Hsun*, trans. Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1989), 197.

²⁸ Hsun (Lu Xun), “Regret for the Past,” 209.

the praising of Nora, a woman bucking societal convention, emulated the lifestyle that the couple sought for themselves and their fascination with Western perceptions and constructions of reality. The reference to these two Western works, and his job translating connected him and Tzu-chun with the intelligentsia surrounding Shanghai, the same groups that scholar Shu-mei Shih argues participated in the “cultural expansionism” in semi-colonial China.²⁹ This placed the main characters of the short story seeking to identify with, and desiring to belong among, the intelligentsia of Republican China. It should be noted that Lu Xun was politically left-leaning and, as a participant of the May Fourth Movement, he was both extremely patriotic and nationalistic. This could also explain Lu Xun’s apparent dismissal of certain Western ideals as potentially dangerous to the goals of Chinese leftists.³⁰

In Mao Dun’s *Midnight*, similar, although more negative, depictions of the Modern Girl were represented. In the opening pages of the novel, Mr. Wu commented to his niece Huei-fang that even the country girls wear fashionable clothes, to which she responded, saying: “even country girls like to look pretty and smart nowadays.” Later in the same scene, Mr. Wu observed several Modern Girls, one wearing a “close-fitting light-blue chiffon, her full, firm breasts jutting out prominently, her snowy forearms bared,” and another “fashionably dressed in a transparent, sleeveless voile blouse, displaying her bare legs and thighs.”³¹ While at a ball, Mr. Wu noticed some Modern Girls whose “light silk dresses barely concealed their curves” and lips were “blood-red.”³² Based on the evidence regarding the modernization of Chinese women of the time, the women that Mao Dun described in *Midnight* are *modeng xiaojie* and followers of Western fashion ideals. Mr. Wu eventually died from a heart attack due to the extreme erotic nature of the Modern Girl. This reflected Mao Dun’s communist leanings, which viewed such behavior as dangerous to society and Western in nature. Historian Madeline Dong argued that semi-colonial China’s desire for

²⁹ Shu-mei Shih, *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semicolonial China 1917-1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 69.

³⁰ It is noteworthy that Lu Xun, as a participant of the May Fourth Movement and the League of Left-Wing Writers, was liberal, but was not a member of the Communist Party. Consequently, it would be mistaken to believe that Lu Xun was a defender of traditional family norms. He would have been more likely to believe in egalitarian marriages, much like those defended and practiced by He Zhen. Further evidence of this can be seen in his speech—“What Happens after Nora Leaves Home?”—where Lu Xun argued that women need to obtain financial independence if they want to have true freedom.

³¹ Mao Dun (Mao Dun), *Midnight*, trans. (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1979), 9-10.

³² Mao Dun, *Midnight*, 13-14.

foreign products, “had a strong impact on the modernity of the Chinese Modern Girl,” and this was visible in Mao Dun’s depiction. Magazines like *Furen huabao* described the “ideal modern Chinese woman as authentically or properly Westernized in her appearance, behavior, education, and mentality.”³³

Dun’s depiction of fashionable and Westernized Shanghai women was similar to the literary depictions of the Japanese *moga*. Japanese author Junichiro Tanizaki’s *Naomi* like “Regret for the Past” served as a cautionary tale. In *Naomi*, the idea of a Japan influenced by the West was in the forefront of the novel. The male protagonist, Jōji, groomed a willing young woman, Naomi, who appeared “Eurasian” and resembled actress Mary Pickford, as a Westernized *moga*. It should be noted that although Naomi was becoming a *moga*, she still maintained elements of Japanese society, making her exotic to actual Westerners.³⁴ According to literary scholar Ken Ito, as “much as Naomi [was] the fable of a Japanese man dominated by his obsession with the West, it [was] also the story of a ‘West’ that can be manipulated, objectified, and even consumed.”³⁵ This made Naomi and the *moga*, as well as the Modern Girls in *Midnight*, transnational characters similar to the other transnational characters produced within China.

Public Spaces and the *Moga* and the *Modeng Xiaojie*

Another approach to looking at the modernization of women in East Asia was through an examination of public spaces in depictions of the Modern Girl. As women commenced working outside the home, they started to attend dances, go to the movies, and engage in other activities in public places. Men and women also started to interact more openly and frequently. This showed a commonality between the Modern Girl and the New Woman, as each group fought against gender-roles concerning women in the public sphere.

The use of public space in literature of the time works as a sign of modernity and angst about women in public spaces. This theme was evident in Lu Xun’s, “Regret for the Past” when the narrator shared his concern about lascivious stares: “On the road I was conscious of searching looks, sarcastic

³³ Dong, “Who is Afraid of the Chinese Modern Girl?,” 203.

³⁴ Junichiro Tanizaki, *Naomi*, trans. Anthony Chambers (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1985), 191-193.

³⁵ Ken Ito, *Visions of Desire: Tanizaki's Fictional Worlds* (Stanford University Press, 1991), 100.

smiles or lewd and contemptuous glances which tended, if I was not careful, to make me shiver.”³⁶ Shi Zhecun’s, “One Evening in the Rainy Season” presented a similar concern. In this piece, the narrator described an evening walk in Shanghai during the rainy season. After he noticed a woman who probably a *modeng xiaojie*, based on his description of her beauty and makeup, as well as his depiction of her as “coy” and “bewitching,” he decided to be a “brave, medieval warrior” and to use his “umbrella as a shield, warding off the attacking spears of rain.”³⁷ As he walked alone with the woman, he wondered if people would naturally assume that she was his wife and felt “proud” that people might make such an assumption.³⁸ Shi Zhecun suggests very clearly in this piece, that women were not to be alone, and if they were in the company of men it should be with their husband or family. After he feels guilt about being seen with a woman who was not his wife, he tilts the umbrella down to help obscure their faces in an attempt to maintain some anonymity.

Trains, trolley buses, and coffee houses were common motifs in the depictions of the Modern Girl, and played pivotal roles in works of Modern Girl literature. Tanizaki’s titular character, Naomi, was a *moga* partly because she occupied a public space working as a *jokyu* (cafe waitress), upon her discovery by Jōji. Works like Zhang Henshui’s *Shanghai Express* and Eileen Chang’s *Lust, Caution*, which took several decades to complete, also focused on the main characters public interactions. Figures 3, 4 and 5 show some common themes presented regarding the public anxieties produced when women began entering the public sphere. The women in these images have shared characteristics: they do not keep to themselves, they are slender, they are fashionable, and when parts of their limbs are shown, they are perfectly formed. Their faces are more individualized and they are the perfect example of sensuality, femininity, and bellicosity. While the images shared similarities, they were also distinctive, with one being a large group of “erotic” women controlling or one “erotic” woman controlling a whole train or a soda shop. These depictions were also telling in another manner. Although designed both to demonize the

³⁶ Hsun (Lu Xun), “Regret for the Past,” 200.

³⁷ Shi Zhecun, “One Evening in the Rainy Season,” in *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Chinese Literature*, ed. Joseph S.M. Lau and Howard Goldblatt (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1995), 130, 133.

³⁸ Zhecun, “One Evening in the Rainy Season,” 129, 133.

Modern Girl and to scare society, it also fetishized them. Therefore, these quasi-erotic images inadvertently gave modern girls' power and influence over men with their sexuality. The drawings were striking and the messages that resonated in each image was that women were now present in modern society, and she produced anxiety among the general public through her multi-faceted appearances. In addition, this anxiety created authority for the Modern Girl, a covert literal form of body politics.

Frequently, New Women were juxtaposed against Modern Girls, who were held responsible for embracing negative aspects of modernity, such as commodity culture and disillusionment. During the early Republican period, visual consumption of posters, calendars, cinema, and periodicals were the main medium for cultural consumption. The stereotype of the Modern Girl as "modern metropolitan" young women who focused on cosmetics and fashion as a sign of modernity, all-the-while maintaining an aura of mystery, while also being perceived as "a threatening figure," was nominally true. In addition, the Modern Girl was frowned upon when the "commodity became the modern of modernity," in this case they were visible.³⁹ This can be seen in magazines that emphasized beauty trends, but also in popular literature of the day. Shi Zhecun constructed a dualistic nature of the New Women/Modern Girl by utilizing "traditional" Chinese women stereotypes of "the enigmatic woman, the estranged wife, the prostitute, and the inhibited woman."⁴⁰ Once these tropes became employed by the intelligentsia, coupled with the notion that the tradition espousing New Women was the patriotic ideal, it revealed the dangerous nature of the Modern Girl in China. It is this retrenchment of traditional stereotypes that complicates the analysis of the competing visions of modernity.

Related to the notion that the Modern Girl was a "modern metropolitan," was their rejection of the Confucian ideology that children belonged to their parents. Tani Barlow has argued that Modern Girls viewed cosmetics as an act of "self-ownership," "personal pleasure," and the "pleasure that others will

³⁹ Tani E. Barlow, "Buying In: Advertising and the Sexy Modern Girl Icon in Shanghai in the 1920s and 1930s," in *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization*, ed. Alys Eve Weinbaum et al (Durham: NC, Duke University Press, 2008), 289, 313; Dong, "Who is Afraid of the Chinese Modern Girl?" 200, 195; Stevens, "Figuring Modernity," 82.

⁴⁰ Rosenmeier, "Women Stereotypes in Shi Zhecun's Short Stories," 44.

take in her self-care,” which the “bodily satisfaction she feels, justify commodity life as such.”⁴¹ Barlow’s four points demonstrated how these benefits justified consumer culture. It is also from this vantage point that agency was obtained from the use of cosmetics as a means of reasserting one’s autonomy in the face of “emperors, husbands, or magical beings since they belong to the modern women herself.”⁴² So if the Modern Girl was free from her parents, and a “modern metropolitan,” she would be free to pursue her life in the public sphere.

Zhang Ailing’s essay also explores the use of public space for the Modern Girl. Zhang writes that the “[s]ocial flowers and prostitutes wore spectacles just for the way they looked, since spectacles were a sign of modernity.”⁴³ The only reason why these women wore glasses was to be seen. Essentially, if these women did not need them for their vision, the spectacles were a fashion accessory, and the wearer of the fashion desires to be seen with them. This can be only done in the public sphere. While Zhang was referencing spectacles as a physical and tangible object, it reminds one of Liz Conor’s belief that for Modern Girls “to identify themselves as modern, the performance of their gendered identity had to take place within the modern spectacularization of everyday life,” i.e. in public places.⁴⁴ Conor argued that the “feminization of youth culture gave younger women a greater sense of cultural inclusion and presence.”⁴⁵ This allowed flappers the mobility needed to be both a part of society, and to be seen apart from traditional society. While the cult of youth was around before the 1920s, it was now a “spectacle” and those who scrutinized the visibility “only served to intensify women’s exposure and eroticism.”⁴⁶ In addition, it was through this marked mobility and visibility that the flappers increased their agency.

Both Japanese and Chinese women employed the camera as a tool of liberation. The Bluestockings of Japan, for instance, used self-portraits that redefined and “directed how and by whom the New Woman should be defined.”⁴⁷ Thus with the Modern Girl, identity and public spaces were tied to recent inventions

⁴¹ Barlow, “Buying In,” 308.

⁴² Barlow, “Buying In,” 307-308.

⁴³ Zhang, “A Chronicle of Changing Clothes,” 434.

⁴⁴ Conor, *The Spectacular Modern Woman*, 7.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 226.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 231.

⁴⁷ Bardsley, “The New Women Exposed,” 40.

such as the camera and then later cinema. Through the medium of photography, Japanese women brought the attention of the readers to their own and other women's plight. In China, originally only lower-class women had their pictures published since it was viewed as indecent or a sign of prostitution, but eventually respectable and honorable women appeared in magazines and newspapers.⁴⁸ Chinese women displayed their emancipation through portraits that retained both traditional Chinese motifs and their newly adopted fashion sense. Before this shift, women in Japan and China were largely photographed to promote prostitution, but now these women were shaking off the shackles of that taboo and standing in front of the lens. This served to reinforce the idea that modernity was not for the upper echelon of society. The disruption of class by non-elites using items that were viewed for elites only complicates the traditional account that the Modern Girl was a representation of, and merely an adaption of, Western fashion.

The camera was giving women the freedom to reside in public spaces, even when they were not physically present. Essentially, through the use of photography, men were permitted a voyeuristic look at the female figure and, to a degree, her psyche, during some of her most vulnerable times. Consequently, even though the camera work could be done in any place or setting, the displaying of such images would have been primarily through public spaces, or at the very least, places that women did not have access to before the widespread use of photographs in publications. The women in these images were not playing coy or bashful and, most of the time, they did not withhold their gaze while smiling flirtatiously [see Figure 6]. Women in cartoons that feature cameras were often seen enjoying the voyeuristic opportunities that they were granted during this modern age, and men's true intentions for these images were revealed. Consequently, the new aesthetics created by photography allowed the female form "an entirely new political meaning and ethical value," and displaying the female body became a "part of a new public discourse related to modernity in everyday life."⁴⁹ This combination of public spaces and increased

⁴⁸ Dong, "Who is Afraid of the Chinese Modern Girl?," 197.

⁴⁹ Lee, *Shanghai Modern*, 74.

visibility through technology harkens back to Conor's earlier argument that newfound conditions of visibility "only served to intensify women's exposure and eroticism."⁵⁰

Women's Autonomy and Physicality in East Asia

Two of the most important motifs regarding the Modern Girl were her autonomy and agency. In many ways, if it was not for that agency and autonomy, the previous two themes of identity and public spaces would simply not exist. It should be noted that autonomy in China and Japan was through physicality and most visible in public spaces, which was not entirely the case with the flapper. This frequently occurred in coffee and tea houses, theaters, dance halls, and other public places, and thus included consumption. Additionally, the East Asia Modern Girl actively consumed her literary, periodical, and cinematic depictions, and these representations were the main catalyst for the dissemination of the Modern Girl aesthetic. This was especially true in East Asia, as visual culture was one of the primary vehicles of consumption during the Interwar Period. Consumption, no matter its form, allowed the Modern Girl to be empowered through a sense of self-fashion and physicality. This permanently linked autonomy, consumption, and physicality in East Asia, and the United States.

Autonomy can be found in the articles of Chinese periodical, *Ling Long*, which was tailored to the interests of the Modern Girl. In a *Ling Long* article, the author articulates five specific qualities that every Modern Girl possessed. Autonomy by financial means was one essential component to her success. "She must have the ability to stand on her own two feet," declared the author. "She cannot depend on other people, especially economically, because if she is not financially independent she is just a parasite on other people."⁵¹ Chinese anarcho-feminist, He-Yin Zhen, echoed these thoughts when she concluded her piece on women's liberation with two succinct points that all women should "partake in the joys of freedom." The first point is that women should enjoy professional independence and the second is that all women should have equal rights to participate fully within the political system.⁵²

⁵⁰ Liz Conor, *The Spectacular Modern Woman*, 7-8, 226, 231.

⁵¹ "Ling long. Vol. 4, issue 135 (1934), page 583," *Columbia University Libraries Online Exhibitions*, accessed April 19, 2016, <https://exhibitions.cul.columbia.edu/exhibits/show/linglong/item/9352>.

⁵² He-Yin Zhen, "On the Question of Women's Liberation," in *The Birth of Chinese Feminism: Essential Texts in Transnational Theory*, ed. Lydia Liu et al (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 70.

While coming from a more flippant perspective, another *Ling Long* article explained how to generate indigenous female stars by arguing that, “women should learn how to drive a car, because if a fan or admirer gives her a car, she herself can personally drive it and can seek publicity 24 hours a day.”⁵³ While this sentiment seems frivolous, or at best satirical, it contained within it a deeper meaning. Women in China were not to go out alone, let alone drive themselves. The same was also true about Japan at this time.⁵⁴ Messages such as the *Ling Long* piece gave the power of personal autonomy to the woman possessing the car, which was also a public activity. In the article, the publicity came from not only the actress receiving such an extravagant gift, but also because she was taking care of herself via the car, and her efforts to solicit it as a gift.

While receiving the car in the *Ling Long* was important, the main thrust of the article was articulated at the end. There, the author declared that these points “represent the ethical values of Eastern women. Getting entangled with men harms their gentleness and coyness.”⁵⁵ These two sentences were telling. It showed national and regional identity, while acknowledging autonomy in public spaces. It also demonstrated that in East Asia, as it was in the West, physicality served as both a key theoretical and bodily confirmation of equality. The Modern Girl and her allies’ naturally regarded physical activity as an essential expression of women’s freedom. Consequently, these women were depicted swimming, riding bicycles or buses, or participating in numerous activities that involved women performing physical acts in public spaces. In these illustrations, women in motion were linked with expanding freedoms; a woman in motion cannot be contained. Japanese flapper, Konosan also mentioned that sports were common among the *moga*.⁵⁶ These activities and images of them were often propagated and promoted in Modern Girl periodicals [See Figure 7] and the women were often depicted wearing modern attire. This form of public physicality, and public display, has a long tradition in women’s liberation throughout the world.

⁵³ Ling Long. Vol. 3, issue 91 (1933), page 450,” *Columbia University Libraries Online Exhibitions*, accessed April 19, 2016, <https://exhibitions.cul.columbia.edu/exhibits/show/linglong/item/9353>.

⁵⁴ Russell Raymond Voorhees, “Do Flappers Flap in Japan!—I’ll Say They Do!,” *Flapper’s Experience*, August 1926.

⁵⁵ Ling Long. Vol. 3, issue 91 (1933)

⁵⁶ Russell Raymond Voorhees, “Do Flappers Flap in Japan!—I’ll Say They Do!,” *Flapper’s Experience*, August 1926.

The most obvious example from Chinese literature concerning the Modern Girl as autonomous, albeit as a warning, was found in Lu Xun's short story "Regret for the Past." In the story, Tzu-chun twice purported, "I'm my own mistress. None of them [her family and elders] has any right to interfere with me."⁵⁷ This statement worked as an affront to Confucian thought, in which children belonged to their parents. The Modern Girl revolted against this ideology and received criticism for it. Zhang Ailing also detailed autonomy in a unique way in the beginning of her essay on the Modern Girl. Zhang argued that, "[i]n times of political turmoil and social unrest ...there will always be a preference for tight-fitting clothes, light and supple, allowing for quickness of movement."⁵⁸ While this seems like she was strictly speaking out about fashion, the description, "light and supple, allowing for quickness of movement," refers to the wearers' ability to protect their bodies without the burden of cumbersome clothing interfering. The right to self-defense, especially in times of potentially violent political turmoil, was essentially the right to maintain one's own life, and thus the ultimate action in maintaining autonomy and agency.

Japanese poet and founder of the Bluestockings, Hiratsuka Raichō echoed this sentiment. "The new woman" she declared, was "not satisfied with the life of the kind of woman" who was "made ignorant, made a slave, made a piece of meat by male selfishness/ The new woman seeks to destroy the old morality and laws created for male advantage [...]." Japanese poet Yosano Akiko expressed similar ideas when she penned, "The Day the Mountains Move Has Come" (*Yama no ugoku hi kitaru*). Akiko wrote: "All the sleeping women/ Are now awake and moving."⁵⁹ Akiko was referencing what she perceived as the worldwide awakening towards women's rights, of which the women of Japan were active participants in the push for their rights.

An emphasis on autonomy can be spotted in other *Ling Long* pieces. One example can be seen in the article, "Being a Contemporary Girl," in which the argument is made against people who thought of the Modern Girl as a "flower vase" [a decorative object] and a "plaything." Instead, the article argued

⁵⁷ Hsun (Lu Xun), "Regret for the Past," 198, 199.

⁵⁸ Zhang, "A Chronicle of Changing Clothes," 433.

⁵⁹ Yosano Akiko, "The Day the Mountains Move Has Come," in *The Modern Murasaki*, ed. Rebecca Copeland and Melek Ortabasi trans. Laurel Rasplica Rodd (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 42-43.

that the Modern Girl was a woman who has “a strong body and [was] of sound mind.” The article then stated that this was “fundamental to everything. A girl of today must be a strong-willed success. A weak and feeble-minded person cannot be competent.” The use of the word “plaything” demonstrates a commonly held view toward women in China throughout the Jazz Age, but also shows how roles were changing as cartoons reflected the shift in the collective reality. An example of this was in the cartoon [Figure 8], which also depicted common stereotypes of the Modern Girl, one that was both childish, yet sexual aggressive and sexual available. Juxtaposed to it was a man doing the same thing to women with the caption reading “playthings of different times.” The clothing in the cartoon clearly depicts that the girl was modern, with Western fashion, while the man was depicted as considerably older, with traditional clothing, which also indicated an exploitive class element in this image.

“Being a Contemporary Girl” went on to suggest that, “she must be a learned person, because learning is a tool for achieving one's goals. If she is not completely equipped with this tool, her ability to compete will be diminished and her ambition will be reduced.”⁶⁰ These sentiments echo earlier *Ling Long* articles which stated that although the *modeng xiojie*'s outward appearance was important, “her spirit and brains are most important. How does she think? What is her outlook on life? What are her convictions?”⁶¹ The article then concluded by saying, “of these two conditions, without a doubt, the second condition is much more important; after all, isn't the modern girl's inner substance always more important than her external appearance?”⁶² These quotes demonstrated a continuity of thought between the Modern Girl and New Woman like Sarah Grand and He-Yin Zhen, who fought against long held societal beliefs regarding women and education.

Zhang Ailing also discussed the autonomy of the Chinese Modern Girl as a whole against the fashion industry. Zhang stated that there were “no great fashion houses like Lelong's and Schiaparelli's in Paris that monopolize the market and exert influence throughout the world of white people.” Zhang

⁶⁰ “Ling long. Vol. 4, issue 135 (1934), page 583,” *Columbia University Libraries Online Exhibitions*, accessed April 19, 2016, <https://exhibitions.cul.columbia.edu/exhibits/show/linglong/item/9352>.

⁶¹ “Ling long. Vol. 3, issue 99 (1933), page 883,” *Columbia University Libraries Online Exhibitions*, accessed April 19, 2016, <https://exhibitions.cul.columbia.edu/exhibits/show/linglong/item/9354>.

⁶² “Ling long. Vol. 3, issue 99 (1933), page 883,” *Columbia University Libraries Online Exhibitions*, accessed April 19, 2016, <https://exhibitions.cul.columbia.edu/exhibits/show/linglong/item/9354>.

contended that there were distinctive aspects of the Chinese Modern Girl compared to her European and North American (“white people”) counterparts. Zhang went on to situate that Chinese “tailors take no initiative and can only follow the vast, unaccountable waves of communal fancy that become apparent from time to time. And it is for this reason that Chinese fashions can be more reliably read as representing the will of the people.”⁶³ Zhang was claiming that this makes China, in some ways, a more democratic nation than other nations. This argument was intriguing and seemingly has some anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist sentiments as its anchors. If nothing else, it clearly demonstrated Zhang’s belief that China rightfully belongs in the company of the modern nations of the West and Japan.

Newer research supports this interpretation and questions the common explanation that the “Modern Girl and her male counterparts [...] were products of colonial culture.”⁶⁴ The Modern Girl look was obtainable, “with promises of class mobility that advertisers frequently used to sell products.”⁶⁵ Thus throughout Shanghai, Hong Kong, Tokyo and other parts of urban China and Japan, lower and middle-class women could manipulate their appearance, blurring class and ethnic distinctions, as well as gaining a kind of autonomy.⁶⁶ Women who worked in the cafes and offices around Shanghai or Tokyo could look and act modern, while the upper-middle class and elites often felt that modernity belonged to them and was their sole right.⁶⁷ There was a continued blurring of class distinctions every time the Modern Girl indulged as a consumer of Western culture. Meanwhile the New Women who practiced *xianyuan* were thought of as true patriots, leading to unfair prejudices and stereotypes of the Modern Girl, especially in China. This reinforces Rosenmeier’s belief that the *xianyuan* were virtuous and understood their class and societal roles as they pursued “proper” reform, while the Modern Girl disrupted the established order.

⁶³ Zhang, “A Chronicle of Changing Clothes,” 438-439.

⁶⁴ Dong, “Who is Afraid of the Chinese Modern Girl?,” 214.

⁶⁵ Modern Girl Around the World Research Group, “The Modern Girl Around the World: A Research Agenda and Preliminary Findings,” *Gender & History* 17 no. 2 (August 2005): 287.

⁶⁶ Dong, “Who is Afraid of the Chinese Modern Girl?,” 201.

⁶⁷ Dong, “Who is Afraid of the Chinese Modern Girl?,” 200-202.

Zhang's views of democracy in China give credence to belief that modernity contained elements of consumerism, widespread capitalism, visual culture, and the spread of globalization.⁶⁸ Chinese consumption, however, was not based on consuming mass produced goods because China lacked industrial capitalism. So according to Zhang, even though Chinese department stores were founded on Western models, China's "backwardness" allowed increased power to be placed in the hands of the Chinese Modern Girl by their acts of self-fashioning. Basically, their self-fashioning was a projection of their will through self-presentation. One that was distinctively Chinese, yet contained elements unique to the transnational Modern Girl. Thus, the "modernity" of the Modern Girl should not be viewed from the negative/positive binary aspect of commodity culture. The Modern Girl maintained agency and were in various countries self-empowered social actors.⁶⁹ If the near simultaneous appearances of the Modern Girl can be used to show agency, and question long held beliefs about commodity culture, was there evidence of this from the *modeng xiaojie*?

The answer lies with the qipao. Qipaos are form fitting dresses that later came to define Chinese dress as a whole, but originally characterized the aesthetic of *modeng xiaojie*. The qipaos also served as a key to understanding that the Modern Girl fashion sense was adaptable to regional settings, and qipaos illustrates a more multi-faceted modernity [see Figures 9 and 10 for examples of the dress; Figure 10 shows the qipao worn with Western fashions]. The caption beside Figure 10 described how the qipao was national and could be used with cosmopolitan and transnational attire: "Spring is the best season for dressing up. If an overcoat is too warm for going out to a park, you'd better take a short one along to put on casually over a qipao." Although there was debate over the derivation of qipaos, there seems to be no scholarly doubts that there was a distinctive Chinese influence in its origin. Qipao-influenced style did not seem to be disseminated outside of China until recently, with the exception of the *áo dài* of Vietnam, showing that at least part of a Modern Girl aesthetic could be developed within a non-Western culture. Modernization in the case of the qipaos did not necessitate the abandonment of Chinese or Japanese

⁶⁸ This also gives credence to the Modern Girl Around the World Research Group's contention concerning modernity. See footnote 10 and 11 and its corresponding paragraphs.

⁶⁹ Alys Eve Weinbaum et al, "The Modern Girl as Heuristic Device," 4, 20-22.

culture, but rather, arose from the opening up of educational systems and the blurring of social class. East Asian Modern Girls also created fear in both “leftist” and “nationalist” interpretations of the Modern Girls’ fashion and attitudes complicates the interpretation of a purely one dimensional interpretation of the birth of the East Asian Modern Girl as a strictly Western import.

Conclusion

There are a myriad of ways that historians can study the Modern Girl of East Asia, and employing literature has proven to be one of the most effective. Chinese author Zhang Ailing in particular, since she was a woman and a Modern Girl, gives unique insights into the proper understanding of the *modeng xiaojie* without the need to infer from a male or the Modern Girl’s critics’ perspective. The Modern Girl proved to be an “important manifestation of this imbrication of the local and the global in these web-like circuits,” as well as, “the Modern Girl’s repeated role in processes of racialization and articulations of nationalism.”⁷⁰ She became “modern” by the use of cosmetics and fashion as a sign of autonomy, her active participation in the public sphere, and her search for identity in a constantly changing world. The Modern Girl simultaneously became the attainable goal of society women and the sometime scourge of colonialism and imperialism. The second generation of New Women had things in common with the previous generation, such as fighting against double standards, but also differed as the rise of mass media allowed for more uniformity in appearance and social practices within their respective groups. The Modern Girl still fought against socio-cultural beliefs about how women should behave in the public sphere; they were fighting the same battle in a different arena.

⁷⁰ Modern Girl Around the World Research Group, “The Modern Girl Around the World: A Research Agenda and Preliminary Findings,” 247.

Chapter 4:

“I am happy to be a Japanese flapper”:

Understanding the Modern Girl from a Cosmopolitan and Transnational Perspective

Previous chapters of this thesis have explored issues related to the Modern Girl in the United States and East Asia. This section, however, will look at her from a transnational and comparative perspective. In this manner, it expands the transnational components of the previous section and complicates the argument that commercial capitalism, consumption, and modernity was a one-sided West to East dissemination. The Modern Girl idea had a cosmopolitan component, which had political implications in a time of intense nationalism. This cosmopolitanism was easily seen in East Asia, but was also visible within the U.S. and serves as an example of Bruce Robbins “actually existing cosmopolitanisms,” the idea that one can share and partake in, or even desire to know better, a foreign culture without losing their own identity.

The exploration of the East Asian Modern Girl from a comparative and transnational perspective makes sense, and no serious scholar doubts she arose through an international cultural exchange. However, what about the American Modern Girl, the flapper? While not as obvious, the proponents of the American flapper style looked to her international counterpart for inspiration. American flappers and their sympathizers defined flappers, at least in part, as transnational and cosmopolitan figures. This was common in *The Flapper*, but similar appeals can be found in the *New York Times*. It is vital to acknowledge that these articles are almost exclusively presenting American articles written for American audiences. Essentially, these articles were Americans interpreting the behaviors of the Modern Girl from an American perspective. By presenting women in these locales as American—or Western—influenced modern girls, they were helping redefine what it means to be a flapper in the American context.

To help understand how flappers employed international women to redefine themselves as cosmopolitans, this chapter contains three main but interconnected sections. The first section returns to *The Flapper* and analyzes its portrayal of the Modern Girl. The second section looks at newspaper depictions of the Modern Girl, predominately the *New York Times*. The final section explores a unique concept of the

time, what sociologists in the 1920s referred to as “racial masquerades,” or the idea that people are able to adopt and remove racialized masks.¹ Building the chapter in this manner, it will demonstrate that the relatively concurrent appearance of the flapper and her international counterpart lend themselves to a more global study, facilitating historians’ efforts to gain a greater understanding of the time and regions in which they lived. It will also show that proponents of the American flapper aesthetic were at least intrigued by the international Modern Girl and praised their lifestyles.

The Flapper and the International

As mentioned in Chapter 2, analyzing *The Flapper* has numerous benefits. At the very least, *The Flapper* maintained a unique voice in understanding the needs and desires of some flappers as well as cultural consumption in the 1920s. Therefore, returning to it to explore the American flapper’s interest in cosmopolitanism was critical to prove that her politics were modern in a very unique way. The magazine contained several items that were noteworthy for analysis. For example there were several parts of letters to the editor detailing the worldwide influence of *The Flapper*. Most of these letters came from Canada, but there were also letters from France, Poland, and other countries, predominantly in Europe. Also of note was *The Flapper’s* ban in Canada under their version of the Comstock Act, with the magazine responding by decrying Canada’s isolationism and appealing to readers to write the Canadian Commissioner of Customs and Excise.² While these details were noteworthy and warranted being mentioned, the most important articles for this research pertain to the East Asian Modern Girl, providing credence for the exploration of U.S. and East Asia. It also shows how the American flapper was a cosmopolitan and transnational symbol.

Typically during this era, most periodical references to foreign culture, ideas, and experiences focused on “exotic” items for consumption, such as cigarettes, dishes, or religious trinkets. These would be examples of potentially negative aspects of commodification and cultural appropriation, especially if the object was stripped of its cultural value and created strictly for mass consumption. *The Flapper* and *Experience*, however, contained a number of articles that showed genuine interest in foreign cultures. One

¹ Alys Eve Weinbaum, “Racial Masquerade: Consumption and Contestation of American Modernity,” in *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization*, ed. Alys Eve Weinbaum et al (Durham: NC, Duke University Press, 2008), 121.

² “What’s the Matter With Canada?,” *The Flapper*, January 1923. David Sloane in *American Humor Magazines and Comic Periodicals* stated that this also happened in the U.S. in 1925 when the magazine was the *Flapper’s Experience*, but it was quickly overturned in court (xxix).

sees this in a picture of Violet Doreen [See Figure 11] performing her “oriental snake dance, specially posed for ‘*Flapper’s Experience*.’”³ The brief caption under the picture stated that the “young owner of these supple, beautiful limbs [was] a lover of jazz, perhaps because she [was] used to hearing heaps of commotion whenever they make a black-and-white study.” It also listed numerous things that flappers stood for: youth, vitality, jazz, and cosmopolitanism via integration. The caption concluded by stating that Doreen was a featured performer at the Queen’s Cabaret in London

Another such example in the *Experience* discussed an 11 year-old girl, Valentine Churchill [Figure 12], who learned to be a “Hindu dancer.” Learning the “Nautch dance” brought her “fame and fortune” as the “only white child to have completely mastered Indian dances.”⁴ Churchill learned these dances when she lived in “Rangoon, India” (now Yangon, Myanmar) with her physician father. The article seemed to be written in support of the girl and her dancing, and even encouraged its readers to partake in it, but it also demonstrated the author’s and the editorial board’s misperceptions and their biases regarding what they perceived as exotic. A telling sentence from the article states that “the lure of the East is not a myth of the imagination but an actual condition of the mind and spirit that all feel who have at one time been residents of the Orient.” The article was also full of references to “eccentric motions,” “snakelike movements,” and “weird oriental strains of music” that illustrated the rampant misunderstanding of the East during this time. These phrases, and the earlier statement, echoed common tropes and beliefs about the Far East at a time when most Americans only knew about Asia through limited contact with immigrants on the west coast and from European fantasy writers.

These depictions express the “orientalist” outlook described by Edward Said, who delineated three fluid types of Orientalism. The first detailed occupations that gather knowledge pertaining to the Orient, including “anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient... either in its specific or its general aspects” such as anthropologists and historians. The second definition rests on the perceptions of Westerners who marked clear “ontological and epistemological distinction” between the Orient and the West. These tended to focus on perceived immutable differences in the “customs, ‘mind,’ destiny” and the

³ *Flapper’s Experience*, April 1925.

⁴ Else E. Bocker, “How to Become a Hindu Dancer Ask Little Valentine Churchill,” *Experience*, January 1924.

people of the Orient.⁵ The final characterization of orientalism involves the hegemonic control through “corporate institutions for dealing with the Orient” that engaged in the “domination, restructuring, and [exercising] authority” over the people of the Orient. The West therefore, was defined as what the East was not, which was highly problematic as it assumes that both the Orient and the West were homogenous and made little distinction between nations regarding colonialism and imperialism.⁶ Valentine’s depiction clearly followed thinking akin to the Said’s second and third points. These images and their corresponding articles and captions build off of the stereotypes that were created in the minds of the average Westerners based on knowledge gleaned from writers, plays, and movies that depicted the East.

While the images of Doreen and Churchill represented an imaginary East, they also exploited a desire for “otherness,” a common trend in the discourse surrounding the Modern Girl. In the Western context this has been called “Asianisation” by some scholars to distinguish it from Said’s “Orientalism.” The Modern Girl Research Group describes the differences between Asianisation and Orientalism while creating their theoretical framework by declaring that they only:

use the term reservedly, underscoring that Asianisation in the way we refer to it – as an aesthetic – is a process of imaging and imagining that is loaded with western power; it is most definitely not about how ‘Asians’ thought about ‘Asianness.’ We distinguish Asianisation from Orientalism not only to suggest the chronological precedence of Orientalism as a form of racialised power, but also in order to specify the particular manner in which Asianisation creates identity through the assertion of difference from the Other. Whereas Orientalism distinguishes the Occidental from the Oriental in order to produce the Occidental’s superiority and prowess, Asianisation expresses the ambition to transform oneself into the Other, if only temporarily, and if only from the position of relative privilege.⁷

While some contend that white European norms influenced the Modern Girl aesthetic as long as it did not hinder normative racial structures, modern girls promoted “otherness” regardless of race. In the United States, advertisements demonstrated the Asianisation and exoticism of products by depicting the Modern Girl with “caricatured, elongated, and often slanted eyes” producing a sense of glamour.⁸ Most likely influenced by Art Deco and Japonisme, cosmetic advertisements depicted the Modern Girl with slanted

⁵ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978), 2, 65-66.

⁶ Said, *Orientalism*, 3; James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 256-258, 272.

⁷ Modern Girl Around the World Research Group, “The Modern Girl Around the World: A Research Agenda and Preliminary Findings,” *Gender & History* 17 no. 2 (August 2005): 259.

⁸ Alys Eve Weinbaum, Lynn M. Thomas, Priti Ramamurthy, Uta G. Poiger, Madeleine Yue Dong, and Tani E. Barlow, “Cosmetics Advertising and the Politics of Race and Style,” in *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization*, ed. Alys Eve Weinbaum et al (Durham: NC, Duke University Press, 2008), 32.

eyes, conveying a sense of “orient” and exoticism, while also generating intercultural and interracial allure.⁹ The desire for “otherness” does not always need to be thought of as another facet of Western domination. It could also entail people adapting to a changing world. Although not exactly the same, Shu-mei Shih noted something similar in her work on China. “Western modernism in particular, has shown China to be an important part of the non-Western alterity that constituted Western Modernism.” Shu-mei Shih then noted that according to “recent ‘multiculturalist’ arguments, China was one of the major ‘influences’ on Western modernism—it was the ‘misuse’ of Chinese culture that contributed to the making of such modernist giants as Ezra Pound.” In this manner, Asianisation was a form of mistaken cosmopolitanism.

Some articles and columns did more than merely espouse stereotypes. The November 1922 issue of *The Flapper* included a picture labeled “A Flapper of Japan” [See Figure 13]. The long caption underneath the picture states that the Japanese finally caught up to the “flapper craze.”¹⁰ The caption noted that the “young lady of the land of the cherry blossom all dressed up in her flapper clothes.” It also reported that she has not “discarded the flowing kimono,” but adorned herself with traditional flapper fashion accessories. This mixture of aesthetics in Japanese society was noted by Miriam Silverberg, who argued that men and women of this time consumed both Western and Japanese art forms. The Modern Girl served as a broker between the incongruous forces created by becoming modern. This was accentuated in her Japanese title, *ero guro nansensu* (erotic, grotesque, nonsense), which employed English loan words, and was a common phrase used to describe this concept. It also showed the desire for newness within elements of Japanese society.¹¹ So widespread was this cultural exchange that that Japanese actors adopted black-face when performing African-American songs or bit-parts in vaudevillian acts.¹² Similarly, in Shanghai authors used “Japanized” and “Europeanized” words and syntax in their literary pieces to make them more modern.¹³ The mixture of Japanese and Western fashion was, therefore, a sign of the cosmopolitan in Japan, and the magazine printing this image and caption was the American attempt to do something similar.

⁹ Modern Girl Research Group, 260; Weinbaum et al, “Cosmetics Advertising and the Politics of Race and Style,” 32-33, 36, 42-46.

¹⁰ “A Flapper of Japan,” *The Flapper*, November 1922.

¹¹ Silverberg, *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense*, 15-16, 72, 82-85, 240-242.

¹² Silverberg, *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense*, pictorial insert between pages 172-173. Silverberg also argued that Japanese consumers rarely homogenized the two and would often “switch codes” for different events.

¹³ Shih, *The Lure of the Modern*, 69.

While the image and caption labeled “A Flapper of Japan” was brief, some articles in the magazine discussed the Modern Girl in greater detail. In *Flapper’s Experience*, “Do Flappers Flap in Japan!—I’ll Say They Do!” [See Figure 14], the article discussed the *moga*.¹⁴ This title was quickly answered on the adjoining page with an affirmative “Yes, and They Bob Their Hair, Go to the Movies, Pick Their Own Hubbies, Wear Sheer Silks and Even Roll Their Eyes.” Outside the opening paragraph, the entire article contained over 1,100 words –mostly quotations—describing to American audiences the Japanese flapper. Although Konosan was far from ordinary, as she was famous enough to travel to the U.S. and Australia, the editors still considered her thoughts important enough share.¹⁵ The article also shows that the magazine was trying to make a global claim, and its mere inclusion shows an interest in foreign culture, something intrinsic to cosmopolitans.

The article opened by describing Konosan (“Kono” would be her surname as “san” is a gender-neutral honorific) as an “honest-to-goodness Japanese flapper right from the Flowery Kingdom” who was “100 per cent flapper from the topmost black hair of her head to the lowermost cell of the bottom of her dainty feet.”¹⁶ The reference to “dainty feet” was probably a misconception concerning China and Japan and references foot binding, a long held Chinese practice. According to the article, she came to the United States to “break in[to] vaudeville,” singing and dancing in Japanese and Western styles, while “convincing Americans that after all there is nothing new under the sun.” Konosan declared that “I suppose you flappers in America think that over in my country, Japan, there are none like you.” She then stated that if Americans believed that, they were “greatly mistaken because we have had flappers there for quite a while.” She qualified these statements by saying that they were not around as long as in the United States. This section ended with an interesting setup to the rest of the piece. She stated that the problems experienced by American flappers were not much “different from all of the trouble that our Japanese flappers have had. After all human nature is pretty much the same whether you find it in America or in Japan.”

¹⁴ Russell Raymond Voorhees, “Do Flappers Flap in Japan!—I’ll Say They Do!,” *Flapper’s Experience*, August 1926.

¹⁵ Nicole Camma, “Japanese flapper lands on Australian shores!,” *ICON Magazine*, November 2013.
<https://anmm.blog/2013/12/09/japanese-flapper/#more-11730>.

¹⁶ Voorhees, “Do Flappers Flap in Japan!—I’ll Say They Do!,” *Flapper’s Experience*.

The first thing that Konosan mentioned was that both types of modern girls have bobbed hair. This section started with “of course the first thing that a flapper in Japan wants to do is to bob her hair.”¹⁷ She then stated that bobbing the hair was “the hardest thing for her to do” as it was “considered to commit [sic] a crime.” She was most likely describing the act of disobeying her parents which she quickly details “when a Japanese girl wants to bob her hair she must first ask her parents” who then seek the advice of other family members, which Konosan describes as a “council of war.” Konosan noted that this request was normally rejected. This was strongly reminiscent of the opposition to the bob cut in the United States which has been detailed in several works of F. Scott Fitzgerald among others.¹⁸ She then mentioned that often, the *moga* bobs her hair anyways, but then was “disowned by her parents and put out of their home.” She would then be taken in by relatives until eventually her parents relented and let her back into their home. This was consistent with other accounts that some *moga* were more traditional, and did not want to disobey their parents unless necessary. Konosan concluded this section by declaring that there was “the same opposition to having hair bobbed in Japan as in your country but a Japanese girl has a far harder time of it.” Konosan also stated that once they became a Modern Girl, they “ceased to attend performances at their own theaters” and watched “American films instead of Japanese plays.”¹⁹ She also made a similar statement when discussing American fashion, although, her depiction shows her, as it does other Japanese “flappers” in the periodical, in a kimono. “The American flapper” Konosan later contended, was “our model in everything we do.” This section was clearly crafted from the quotes for American flappers to identify with the Japanese *moga*.

Konosan also mentioned some differences between the two groups of women. The most noteworthy one was a spirited defense of Japanese men as a poor fit for flappers. Japanese men, according to Konosan, were affectionate, but they did not display it publically as Americans males. Once they were alone, declared Konosan, they “pet their wives and...make love like a regular Valentino,” a reference to one of America’s first Hollywood heartthrobs, the Italian-born Rudolph Valentino. In this section she also mentioned a

¹⁷ Voorhees, “Do Flappers Flap in Japan!—I’ll Say They Do!,” *Flapper’s Experience*.

¹⁸ F. Scott Fitzgerald, “The Ice Palace,” in *Fitzgerald: Novels and Stories 1920-1922*, ed. Jackson R. Bryer (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 2000), 293-294; F. Scott Fitzgerald, “Bernice Bobs Her Hair,” *Saturday Evening Post*, May 1, 1920.

¹⁹ Voorhees, “Do Flappers Flap in Japan!—I’ll Say They Do!,” *Flapper’s Experience*.

change within Japanese society that was more akin to Western societies, which was that “we [*mogas*] pick our own husbands” and now receive “more of the kind [of husbands we] want.”²⁰ This was a clear deviation from Japanese tradition and for the positive, at least according to Konosan. This was an effort for her to show that although there were noticeable difference, they may not be as sharp as they appear. Therefore, there was a sense of an international solidarity based on fighting against long held gender-based societal beliefs and biases regarding women. Its inclusion here also demonstrated the desire for American flappers to align themselves with other modern girls that had clear societal disadvantages. It could also, at least partly, be directed towards feminist critics of flappers by using common arguments by international reform-oriented feminists. These feminists often believed in gender essentialism, or the idea that every woman throughout the world shared an essential nature, or experiences regarding oppression at the hands of men.

This section demonstrated that *The Flapper* looked to her international counterpart for inspiration. It was also demonstrated why the magazine’s interest in the Modern Girl lends itself for a successful comparative and transnational case study. In addition, these articles give historians’ greater understanding on a comparative level. This was especially true for the Konosan piece, as she was a *moga*, who was explaining the differences and similarities between the American flapper and her Japanese counterpart, from her perspective. However, more importantly it illustrated that through the reporting of Modern Girl activities throughout the world, it helped define the American flapper as a cosmopolitan figure.

Mainstream Interest in the International Flapper

Other periodicals also contained very pointed examples of flappers looking to their international counterparts as inspiration and sometimes even bewilderment. The *New York Times*, partly because it was based in the most cosmopolitan part of the United States, would be the prominent example of this phenomenon. These articles often interpreted the activism and endeavors of foreign modern girls from an American perspective. By being written in this manner, these articles seek to incorporate their behaviors and actions, especially when it comes to activism, within the scope of the American flapper experience.

In a *New York Times* article, arctic explorer Donald B. MacMillan detailed the people he encountered, including Canadian Eskimo (Inuit) flappers. The article noted how they “haven’t bobbed their

²⁰ Voorhees, “Do Flappers Flap in Japan!—I’ll Say They Do!,” *Flapper’s Experience*.

hair ..." but "they like to smoke cigarettes."²¹ The explorer also mentioned something that would have been considerably different from the Modern Girl in other contexts. According to MacMillan, these women normally would have "trouble finding enough girls to go around, but this year, for some reason, there is a small surplus and a number of unmarried young women—a very unusual condition among the Polar Eskimos." This statement was remarkable as it was probably a sign that modern conceptions of birth control and family planning were gaining traction in this remote setting. In addition, both the flapper aesthetic and the flapper custom of marrying later seemed to be gaining some adherents. Another noticeable point from this sentence was that the flappers were growing in number, and they were seemingly growing in acceptance and stature.

Other *New York Times* articles discussed modern girls from a political perspective and echoed similar articles in *The Flapper*, in this case Egyptian women fighting for equal rights. The article explicitly called these feminists "New Women," placing them squarely within the worldwide larger New Woman Movement. Within the article, however, there were interesting phrases that inform the study of the Modern Girl as a transnational phenomenon. Although some of their activities seem more related to clubwomen or new women, the women in the article, especially the younger women, wore "jaunty, flapper" attire, specifically hats, which demonstrated "vividly her rebellion against Moslem conventions."²² In addition, the picture of Niala Khayatt, who was mentioned as politically active, was clearly dressed as a flapper with the long bob hairstyle and appears to be wearing a crochet headband [see Figure 15]. Also telling was the apparent approval of this mixture of flapper aesthetics, activism, and other club and New Woman activities in the article.

The article started by proclaiming that the "women of Egypt are ablaze" and that "customs, inhibitions and suppressions contribute fuel to the flames."²³ The Egyptian New Woman consisted of "rich and powerful Moslem women, united with aristocratic Copts." This relatively broad coalition of Muslims and Christians referred to historical Egyptian women such as Queen Hatshepsut to claim that they should

²¹ "Eskimo Flappers Like Cigarettes: Macmillan Records Modernity of Arctic Maidens—Movies Awed the Natives," *New York Times*, September 17, 1924.

²² Beatrice Hill Ogilvie, "New Women of Egypt Struggle To End Age-Old Wrongs: In Spite Of Islamic Religious Prejudice They Begin to Accomplish Reforms in a Land Where Once They Were Virtual Slaves," *New York Times*, June 17, 1928.

²³ Ogilvie, "New Women of Egypt Struggle To End Age-Old Wrongs," *New York Times*, June 17, 1928.

be treated fairly, a strategy employed by their American compatriots. Like their international counterparts, these Egyptian women were from families of means and were educated. They first came to prominence advocating for Egypt's independence. After achieving independence in 1922, they then sought traditional women's rights such as suffrage, education, divorce reform, and spousal abuse. In addition, these women formed the *Club Feminin* in Cairo and started some literary journals, *L'Espoir* and *Al Amal*, to help them secure additional support for their causes. These women also advocated for typical clubwoman activism such as literacy and clean food and water. These organizations were created to "pound... advanced ideas into the heads of Egyptian men, most of whom are still dozing in medieval Islamic orthodoxy."

While these actions illustrated actions and beliefs that were similar to other women's advocacy groups, the article also detailed struggles that would have been unique to the region. One of the more notable efforts was the women's opposition to polygamy. The Egyptian New Women used the Quran to further their cause. "Marry but two or three or four," stated the Quran "and if ye fear that ye shall not act equitably, then one only."²⁴ The feminists then declared that "this decree" was "a round-about way" for Muhammad to safely promote monogamy. They continued the argument by advancing the question "how can any man treat two or three wives equitably?" in which they answered empathically, "no." The Egyptian feminists also fought against polygamy by arguing that "overpopulation" was "Egypt's greatest curse." This was a common argument in the West, often employed in the promotion of sexual education and birth control. In addition, they fought against the lessening of punishments for men who killed their wives when caught in adultery: "Men kill women for a fault which they themselves commit daily, and yet you propose to lighten the penalty. It is a revolting discrimination!"

The article also mentioned that historically women in Egypt were highly esteemed. It also detailed that past women were active in commerce and argued that the "pendulum may not swing back so far, but practical women realize that in this industrial age the path to the political influence they covet may well lead through the market place."²⁵ It also argued that these women were "gradually awakening the public conscience to the menace of dirt, flies and the many social plagues that sap the vitality of the nation." These women also sought to "alleviate sordid conditions in the villages where sanitation and hygiene are

²⁴ Ogilvie, "New Women of Egypt Struggle To End Age-Old Wrongs," *New York Times*, June 17, 1928.

²⁵ Ogilvie, "New Women of Egypt Struggle To End Age-Old Wrongs," *New York Times*, June 17, 1928.

unknown.” The article then concluded that the problems in Egypt can only be solved by “reaching the poor, who can neither read nor write, and few of the rich are willing to leave the flesh pots of cosmopolitan Cairo for such service.” This demarcation of the problems within Egypt clearly placed these women as clubwomen, suffragists, reformers, and, also, as flappers. As already discussed, the clear distinctions between these groups in the American scene were also difficult to differentiate.

Although it does contain a certain amount of condescension, the article argued favorably of the actions of these women, who were not only new women, but also flappers. The article also emphatically stated that these “energetic minority of Egyptian women” were “marching up the road to social betterment.”²⁶ These women were seemingly merging flapper aesthetics with their sense of individual autonomy coupled with traditional New Woman activities like suffrage and women’s rights. Even the term “flapper” and “new woman” were practically used interchangeably, especially when describing Mounira Sabet, who held leadership positions in both *L’Espoir* and *Al Amal* and was the person most praised for pounding “advanced ideas into the heads” of those opposed to her reform efforts. These actions and the declaration that her flapper attire demonstrated “vividly her rebellion against Moslem conventions” indicated that the flapper aesthetic contained a political salience. The article by identifying these modern, reform-minded, and recognizably western-influenced women as “flappers,” it was investing the term with a positive, progressive, and political meaning. After all within this context, flapper was a term associated with an American identity. Also of note was that Coptic Christian and Muslim fought in unity for civil rights, which stands as a useful example of cooperation that should be praised and held up as an example for this generation.

The transnational and cosmopolitan character of the flapper extended to West Africa. A *New York Times* article by Erick Berry, detailed her encounters with the West African flapper. Berry was mostly likely the *nom de plume* of author and illustrator Evangel Allena Champlin Best, who wrote historical children’s novels and other materials that contained sympathetic portrayals of “others.” Her article also indirectly detailed the African-American flapper influence on the West African flapper, specifically through the cosmetics manufactured by the Madame C.J. Walker Manufacturing Company. The Berry article first

²⁶ Ogilvie, “New Women of Egypt Struggle To End Age-Old Wrongs,” *New York Times*, June 17, 1928.

mentioned that the West African flapper was similar to American flappers. “The flapper of British West Africa,” declared Berry, was not “so different from the kind we have in the United States.”²⁷ She mentioned several traits that they shared including “bobbed and shingled hair, cigarettes, wrap-around sport skirts, earrings, even bare legs—one hardly knows where to stop in making the comparison.” “They smoked nonchalantly,” proclaimed the article “with that air of bored and posed unconcern that one sees on the faces of the smoking flappers in New York.” This statement, coupled with Berry’s sympathetic portrayals of international cultures, indicated that Berry equated these flappers with others around the world. The piece also stressed that the West African flapper used modern cosmetics, even while also employing traditional use of kohl as eyeliner, as a uniform to separate themselves from others, much as East Asian and North American Modern Girls. “No modern girl ever took more care of her hands than these girls,” Berry reported “They henna their nails, too.” By arguing in this manner, the article suggests that the American flapper style was liberating, socially and politically.

Another similarity with the American flapper, especially African-American flappers, was the use of hair straightening products. The company started by African-American business women, Madam C. J. Walker, exported hair and skin care products to women of color in Latin America and Africa.²⁸ The “straightening locks and putting kinks in straight locks” declared the article, was a “tonorial achievement not confined to civilization [i.e. the West].”²⁹ African-American elites used these products “as a sign of black American modernity and respectability, arguing against those who saw the enhancement of appearance to be artificial and dangerous.”³⁰ Soon afterwards, advertisers started to promote “hygienic and beauty products as a universal need.” Quickly thereafter, African hairdressers, predominately women, came to the United States to receive training in “African American beauty culture” and “then return[ed] home to work as beauticians.”³¹ Consequently, these African beauticians learned a modern trade, and adopted it and

²⁷ Erick Berry, “Flappers of Africa Are Much Like Our Own: They Do Marvelous Things with Their Hair and Are Partial to Vivid Garments,” *New York Times*, May 17, 1925.

²⁸ Kathy Peiss, “Girls Lean Back Everywhere,” in *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization*, ed. Alys Eve Weinbaum et al (Durham: NC, Duke University Press, 2008), 349.

²⁹ Berry, “Flappers of Africa Are Much Like Our Own,” *New York Times*, May 17, 1925.

³⁰ Peiss, “Girls Lean Back Everywhere,” 350.

³¹ Peiss, “Girls Lean Back Everywhere,” 348, 350.

merged aspects of it with their own cultures. Not only did this allow these business women a large degree of autonomy and self-reliance, it also demonstrated how transnationalism worked among minorities.

The article also outlined several indigenous influences on the West African Modern Girl. One of the most notable was the way they wore earrings in Africa. According to Berry, in the “lobes of the ears the flapper wears huge rings of brass, and here again she puts one over on the American flapper—she wears additional little rings stuck in all around the shell of the ear, and often a stud of brass of brass in one nostril.”³² Berry goes on to say that, although most of the West African flappers do not dance with boys before marriage and that they married young, she was “in many ways...even more free than our own younger generation.” However, once they were married they had a “special dance of their own...called the *gadan mata*,” literally translated as “the dance of the wives,” but it was “really a flappers’ dance” and “very pretty to watch.” It continued on by saying that the dance contained all “the airs and graces of flappers.” The most noticeable way that they were freer, however, was that society did not “gossip if the African flapper picks out a promising suitor without formalities,” and had “almost perfect liberty to make her own choice in marriage.” The article also ended on a positive and striking note. It started by giving a list of some liberties that were allowed to West African flappers: she can “wear few clothes without criticism,” she “does not face the constant temptation of the Eighteenth Amendment and can smoke as she pleases. After all, perhaps, she has little to learn from the home brand.” The phrase “she has little to learn from the home brand” lends credibility to the belief that Berry supported the West African flapper. Moreover, the phrasing, and others in the piece, also implied that she could offer something to the American flapper.

These articles show an interest in how the Modern Girl aesthetic was adapted in other parts of the world. This interest in the global, during a time of increased isolation, also contained an element of the political. In addition, these articles by presenting the women in places like West Africa and Egypt as Westernized or Americanized, they were essentially challenging common misperceptions on what it meant to be an American Modern Girl. So while there was no clear evidence that suggests that *The Flapper* or flappers influenced the *New York Times*, or the opposite, these articles indicate that American flappers, as well as some other Americans were interested and fascinated by the Modern Girl aesthetic.

³² Berry, “Flappers of Africa Are Much Like Our Own,” *New York Times*, May 17, 1925.

The American Flapper and Racial Masquerade

While the previous section focused on elements of the transnational and cosmopolitan Modern Girl, this section will deal with cosmopolitan aspects within the United States. This section will explore the concept that 1920s sociologists called the “racial mask” or “racial uniform.” Modern scholars typically lump these terms and their corresponding beliefs under the blanket term “racial masquerade.” Racial masquerade involved the “purchasing and putting on” a racialized mask, but also included the “removal of the mask and thus the taint of racial ‘otherness.’”³³ This permitted the Modern Girl aspects of “otherness” without sacrificing the benefits of white (or the dominant cultures) privilege, which made these women more modern in a racialized society.³⁴

The “racial masquerade” allowed the Modern Girl to demonstrate “otherness” via her control of the mask during a time of increasing ethnocentrism and racism. Advertisements from the 1920s and 1930s often promoted notions of racial superiority, such as products designed to lighten the skin tone of African Americans.³⁵ Conversely, tanning products gained in popularity, which allowed aspects of white privilege, the ability to darken skin while maintaining whiteness, combined with athleticism and outdoor leisure. In addition, some advertisers employed an “ethnically ambiguous depiction of women” to sell their products. These advertisements frequently combined physical characteristics, including athletic African-American shoulders and almond-shaped East Asian eyes, with whitish skin to create a “cosmopolitan type” of Modern Girl [see Figure 5 for a possible example].³⁶ This trend was also influenced by the Art Deco Movement. During the 1920s, Lucy Fischer has argued that the placement of Art Deco women on commercial products “proliferated to a level that almost defies explanation.”³⁷ Both inspired by and inspiring the aesthetics of cinema, periodicals, and other art forms, flappers actively sought to reinvent themselves by becoming modern images in the public realm.³⁸ Thus the seemingly ubiquitous nature of the Art Deco women during the Jazz Age became a symbol of modern femininity to adherents of the

³³ Weinbaum, “Racial Masquerade,” 121.

³⁴ Weinbaum et al., “Cosmetics Advertising and the Politics of Race and Style,” 46.

³⁵ Weinbaum et al., “Cosmetics Advertising and the Politics of Race and Style,” 42.

³⁶ Uta G. Poiger, “Fantasies of Universality: *Neue Frauen*, Race and Nation in Weimar and Nazi Germany,” in *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization*, ed. Alys Eve Weinbaum et al. (Durham: NC, Duke University Press, 2008), 326.

³⁷ Lucy Fischer, *Designing Women: Cinema, Art Deco, and the Female Form* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 31.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 3, 31.

cosmopolitan lifestyle. However, in stark contrast with its well-known modernist appeal, Art Deco was also eclectic and used exotic and primitive motifs involving flappers, which Fischer contended “restaged the oppressive power relations of imperialism.”³⁹ All of this occurred during a period marked by Jim Crow, immigration restrictions, discourses on the “yellow peril,” and warnings of race suicide.⁴⁰

The metaphor of the masquerade was important and vital to understanding certain elements of the flapper’s cosmopolitan image. Social constructions of race made it hard for some individuals to fully become modern girls of the dominant culture. Japanese immigrant women in the U.S., for instance, sought acculturation, normally coupled with modernity, by dressing and acting like a typical White American flapper, and they often successfully became an American Modern Girl.⁴¹ The downside was that she now belonged to a distinct group, the flappers, and was thus a minority within a minority. Not always, but often, other Japanese immigrants viewed the Japanese woman who adapted modern Western dress as outsiders. Unfortunately it is hard to know if the Japanese-American Modern Girl was accepted by white flappers. Evidence suggests that some minority modern girls of East Asian descent achieved a certain degree of success, such as actress Anna Mae Wong and flapper essayist and poet Flora Belle Jan, who may be best known today for writing “It is hard to be born a woman but hopeless to be born a Chinese.”⁴² According to Joshua Zeitz, Jan’s “exploits and adventures, but for their ethnic twist, could have substituted” for Lois Long’s notorious flapper exploits in New York City.⁴³

Jan’s essay about minority women was riveting, but she has better works that illustrate the cosmopolitan nature of some women during this time. In “Chinese Girls of the East and West,” she detailed the different behavior between female Chinese-born and Chinese American students at the University of Chicago living during the 1920s.⁴⁴ She noted that Chinese students were “shy and retiring”

³⁹ Ibid., 151, 155.

⁴⁰ Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 80-81; Weinbaum et al., “Cosmetics Advertising and the Politics of Race and Style,” 46.

⁴¹ Weinbaum, “Racial Masquerade,” 135-136.

⁴² Judy Yung, “‘It Is Hard to Be Born a Woman but Hopeless to Be Born a Chinese’: The Life and Times of Flora Belle Jan,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 18 no. 3 (1997), 66-68, 77.

⁴³ Zeitz, *Flapper*, 265.

⁴⁴ Chinese Americans has had a long and varied history of discrimination. Most Chinese Americans came to the U.S. from the 1840s to the 1870s, looking to escape poverty, a very tumultuous period in China. Overwhelmingly men, most of these workers believed they would eventually return. When they could not return, they intermarried with predominately Irish immigrant women, where they were allowed. Meanwhile, numerous novels depicted Asians overrunning the West, and destroying the Western way of life. This belief was the main theme of the novel *When East Meets West*, which depicted a united “Yellow

and “have no style whatsoever.” She then contrasted them with Chinese-American students, such as herself, who used “powder and rouge...talk slang, flirt openly with boys, dance, drive cars, and go out late, unchaperoned.” Jan argued that this was due to their cultural environment, that it was natural for people to “adopt the best that they can find in the country of their birth.”⁴⁵ Jan essentially argued that there were degrees of fluidity within Chinese-Americans as they adapted in ways that were compatible with the dominant culture, a clear cosmopolitan amalgamation.

Several successful “other” Hollywood actresses who often demonstrated elements of “racial masquerade” included Chinese-American Anna Mae Wong and Mexican-born Dolores Del Rio. These two women were trumpeted as the perfect people to demonstrate the power of Technicolor.⁴⁶ Lupe Vélez was another successful Mexican-born actress during this time and often incorporated Modern Girl aesthetics in her films and her real life. Vélez was often called “The Mexican Spitfire” or “The Mexican ‘It’ girl,” a phrase often associated with the quintessential flapper Clara Bow. Vélez dated Errol Flynn and married Johnny Weissmuller, with little condemnation of miscegenation. Wong was famous for her beauty and her public persona, which balanced Eastern and Western influences. This has led scholar Shirley Jennifer Lim to argue that Wong helped undermine long held prejudices and beliefs that the two were largely irreconcilable and antagonistic toward each other.⁴⁷ Joshua Zeitz argued that Wong’s flapper appearance “challenged the popular belief that flappers need to be white and native-born.”⁴⁸ See Figure 16 for Wong displaying her version of the American Modern Girl style. These actresses, who embraced the Modern Girl aesthetic, earned praise both for their beauty and their acting skills. They were also widely accepted by their audiences, regardless of the racial strife of the time. While the U.S. was not a perfect place of racial

Wave” of East Asian military forces “pouring across the Urals into European Russia” and “threatening to overtake the Northern Hemisphere.” Similar portrayals included Chinese and Japanese overrunning North America. This led Christian educator Sidney Gulick, who sought to make Americans better understand East Asia, to state that the “thoughts and policies of the white nations are being increasingly controlled by the fear of the yellow man.” The fear of miscegenation and the “yellow peril,” as it was called, led to the Chinese massacre of 1871 in Los Angeles’s Chinatown, a race riot that resulted in the largest mass lynching in U.S. history. See Yorimitsu Hashimoto, *Yellow Peril: Collection of British Novels, 1895-1913* (Tokyo: Edition Synapse), 170, 173; Sidney Lewis Gulick, *The American Japanese Problem; A Study of the Racial Relations of the East and the West* (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1914), 216.

⁴⁵ Flora Belle Jan, “Strangers Who Have Met-Chinese Girls of the East and West,” *The Chinese Christian Student* 2 (1927): 10-11.

⁴⁶ Fischer, *Designing Women*, 176-180; Weinbaum et al., “Cosmetics Advertising and the Politics of Race and Style,” 48. Dolores Del Rio was and continues to be viewed as one of the most beautiful women of all time.

⁴⁷ Shirley Jennifer Lim, “I Protest: Anna May Wong and the Performance of Modernity,” *A Feeling of Belonging: Asian American Women’s Public Culture, 1930-1960* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 49-51.

⁴⁸ Zeitz, *Flapper*, 258.

harmony, there seems to have been genuine steps in the right direction, and this was spear-headed by some flapper cosmopolitanism. Although most Americans would not have accepted a Japanese or African-American flapper, it seems clear that minority women adopted the Modern Girl aesthetic as a way of earning acceptance in mainstream society.

The flapper use of “exotic” fashion or interest in other nations seems more innocent and more agreeable than other forms of cultural appropriation during this time.⁴⁹ This may be because there seems to be exchanges that were somewhat mutual and that there was some general interest in the cultures that were being adapted. Noting the cultural exchanges among minority flappers, Joshua Zeitz detailed that “by the late 1920s,” flappers “extended well past the white, middle-class” and included “young black women [who] aspired to flapperdom.” He noted that in an all-black women’s institution in Georgia, they “bobbed their hair, applied lipstick and eyeshadow, and dangled strings of fake pearls from their necks.” Meanwhile, Latinas in Los Angeles “adapted the trappings of flapperdom as the most obvious means to acculturate to the Anglo world” and noted one as saying “I was going to be Clara Bow.” Zeitz declared that “for these young immigrant women,” including Asian-Americans, “becoming a flapper was a way of accommodating the old world to the new.”⁵⁰ Another reason that these cultural exchanges may seem more amenable was because cultural appropriation was a continuous process and almost unavoidable when cultures interact. This was what Jan’s meant when she claimed that people “adopt the best” aspects of culture⁵¹ Anthropologists call this concept “cultural diffusion” and it occurs constantly when cultures interact with one another. Thus, the Modern Girl aesthetic should be viewed as another way of promoting unity by blurring the lines of class, gender, and race in a time during racial and ethnic animus.

It should be noted that flappers were not the only Americans participating in this cultural exchange. Ordinary Americans, for instance, used Japanese fashion before the 1920s, and this lasted throughout the decade even outside the flapper movement. It was also a global phenomenon particularly in Europe, shortly

⁴⁹ While music and dance are common examples of these developments, a more noteworthy case would be the lawsuit brought by Helen Kane against Max Fleischer and his studio over the likeness of Betty Boop. According to Kane, Boop was modeled after her and caused her financial harm. Fleischer won the case because he successfully proved that the image was not stolen from Kane, but from a “negro girl” nicknamed Baby Esther. Not only did Fleischer prove that he did not steal it from Kane, but also that Kane took her style from Baby Esther. Essentially Kane argued that it was acceptable for her to steal art forms from minority groups, unless it affects her and her lifestyle.

⁵⁰ Zeitz, *Flapper*, 264-265

⁵¹ Flora Belle Jan, “Strangers Who Have Met-Chinese Girls of the East and West,” 10-11.

before WWI. This phenomenon demonstrated that commodity aesthetics were not strictly Western imports moving toward colonies and former colonies, which can be clearly seen in the ad in Figure 17 from the *Chicago Daily News*. The advertisement was intriguing considering that at this time Chicago was a newer city, but mass immigration did give it an international character. A related image from the Worcester, Massachusetts's semi-annual May performance of the Scandinavian Women's Gymnastics Club also demonstrated the phenomenon [see Figure 18]. This image was intriguing because Worcester contained both Klan and anti-Klan activities at the time this picture was taken. Cosmopolitanism, therefore, was not just a bastion of the Modern Girl, embraced by others, but also a strong component of the Modern Girl Movement.

The 1920s was a unique time and evidence suggests that flappers, embraced cosmopolitanism. Clearly movies featuring non-white performers such as Anna Mae Wong and Dolores Del Rio, African American dominated jazz, and vaudeville acts such as Konosan had a major influence on the Modern Girl's acceptability. What can be derived from these actions was that flappers and other city dwellers were living a cosmopolitan lifestyle, without giving up their own American identity. In New York City, flappers were visiting Harlem and Spanish Harlem, practically irresistible during the Harlem Renaissance, and frequented local bodegas, restaurants, dance clubs, art galleries and poetry readings. In Chicago, this meant traveling to the South and West sides, which although just started to get Black migrants, were still a hotbed of Polish, Italian, and Irish immigrants. Even with the Chicago Black Renaissance in its embryonic stage, flappers and her dates still visited their jazz clubs. Where there were Japanese and Chinese Americans, people went to their enclaves; American Indians were also explored in a similarly cosmopolitan manner. Hollywood sought out Mexican modern girls to play an assortment of roles, most notable as exotic Polynesians. Even Lakota Chef Chauncey Yellow Robe's daughter, Rosebud Yellow Robe, was sought after by Hollywood after her picture was taken with President Coolidge.⁵² So while flappers were visiting Americans, they were still visiting a unique and foreign culture to them. This

⁵² This occurred during a ceremony in which Rosebud Yellow Robe gave President Coolidge a traditional Lakota "war bonnet" and Coolidge was given the name "Leading Eagle" and declared the "White Chief of the tribe and the Protector of the Indians." Coolidge was the first President given this honorific. Rosebud Yellow Robe was often reported as "one of the most beautiful of the Indian maidens." See "Coolidge Becomes Chief of the Sioux: Amid Indian Yell and Chant President Dons Bonnet in Quaint Deadwood Ritual. Now 'Protector' of Tribe As 'Leading Eagle,' He is Hailed Successor of Sitting Bull—Past Lives Again in Pageantry," *New York Times*, August 05, 1927.

diverse influx of influences, all of which were modern and thus seen as positive by the Modern Girl, would all have a major role in this phenomenon.

Conclusion

The interview with the Japanese *moga*, Konosan, closed on a very positive note; one that encapsulates both the agency and the cosmopolitan and transnational nature of the Modern Girl. Konosan contended that “the flapper” was “only the beginning of a new freedom that will mean much to the entire world, men as well as women.”⁵³ She then emphatically declared that she was “happy to be a Japanese flapper.” The Konosan article ended with her declaring that she loves “the flapper whether she's American or Japanese. I love them all.” This declaration of love has broader implications to the understanding of the Modern Girl as a transnational and cosmopolitan figure that drew its inspiration from an ever-shrinking world. It also showed that in the 1920s and 1930s, the Modern Girl was prevalent throughout the world. These were strong, educated, and autonomous women who knew and fought for what they wanted and desired.

The pictures and articles analyzed here are new examples of what some scholars are referencing when they argue that they can “track Modern Girls specific manifestations” and “demonstrate the simultaneity of the modernist aesthetic ... without turning the simultaneity discovered into either the sameness or equivalence.”⁵⁴ Modernization, as viewed from some of the articles in *The Flapper*, demonstrated that becoming a Modern Girl did not mean that they were no longer adherents to Chinese or Japanese culture. In addition, the 1920s was a time of changing views of what it meant to be an American. References to be an American as outlined earlier was further proof that the flappers, at least those who subscribed to *The Flapper* and its successors, were declaring their own version of Americanism.⁵⁵ Furthermore, as has been shown, the transnational movement of ideas and individuals did not work in only one direction and the importation of Eastern products and culture disrupts common arguments concerning the flow of intellectual and physical capital from West to East during the later stages of colonialism.

⁵³ Voorhees, “Do Flappers Flap in Japan!—I’ll Say They Do!,” *Flapper’s Experience*.

⁵⁴ Alys Eve Weinbaum et al, “The Modern Girl as Heuristic Device,” 4.

⁵⁵ See footnotes 1 in the Introduction and footnotes 37 through 48 in Chapter 2 along with the corresponding paragraphs. The emphasis on flappers being true Americans is an indication that they had a competing vision of what it meant to be an American than their critics.

Conclusion:

“At The End of Every Yarn There’s Always A Little Bull”

“Roughly the world is divided into those who delight in her [the Flapper], those who fear her, and those who try pathetically to take her as a matter of course.”¹

The Flapper and other sources used in this thesis demonstrated how the Modern Girl viewed herself as a self-motivated actor. It also showed that the Modern Girl willfully rebelled against the critiques of a previous generation of women reformers as well as anti-modernists. Becoming a flapper, as Kathy Peiss notes, “really involved a choice—to refashion the body and embrace a new performance of self, sometimes in violation of community standards, church teachings or parental commands.”² This was the crux of the flapper; she no longer sought or desired to fit within traditional norms; she was an autonomous individual with her own thoughts. While society expressed concern surrounding these changes, the flappers sought their own freedom from societal gender roles through their agency. The mixture of consumption, individuality, and self-definition truly made the flapper modern and in rebellion against various forms of oppression. So while some of the Modern Girl’s activities may not seem like reform in the traditional sense, their actions expand the legacy of earlier, more established reformers.

Ling Long and other East Asian writings that were supportive of the Modern Girl show similar trends. The *moga* claimed “common ground with those abroad who had also faced criticism for their public roles as thinking women.”³ She sought camaraderie as kindred spirits within a worldwide community of women intellectuals. Although often portrayed in this manner, the East Asia Modern Girl aesthetic was more than Western imposed cultural styles. The key to understanding the Modern Girl in East Asia was realizing that there were both transnational and local influences working in tandem rather than imperialistic domination. This would also be political in a time of increased nationalism and chauvinism and thus dangerous in Japan as they became increasing militaristic. The Modern Girl style was

¹ Margaret O’Leary, “More Ado about the Flapper,” *New York Times*, April 16, 1922.

² Peiss, “Girls Lean Back Everywhere,” 351.

³ Bardsley, “Seitō and the Resurgence of Writing by Women,” 42.

embraced as an attempt to exert individual freedom, even within the conforming nature of their international subculture.

The Modern Girl as reformer, however, was not limited to agency via consumption nor was it limited to East Asia. The first generation of post-Civil War women reformers fought for the right to vote or participation in higher education, and the Modern Girl continued advocating for equality. Often the Modern Girl, demonstrated by their support of the ERA, believed in a more contemporary view of gender than some women reformers who argued for equality based on fundamental differences between the sexes. *The Flapper*, *Ling Long*, and other pieces produced by flappers and their supporters showed competing visions of what it meant to be a model citizen at a time of increasing nationalism, one that was unequivocally cosmopolitan.⁴ To understand the Modern Girl, it remains vital to acknowledge her as both a transnational and a cosmopolitan movement. Consequently, American flapper politics involved a cosmopolitan aspect that was troubling in a time of rampant ethnocentrism. The politically militant flapper, while controversial, was a reality, and it may be the most important aspect and contribution of this thesis.

Sadly, these reforms were not to continue. The more ostentatious aspects of the flapper lifestyle and their use of conspicuous consumption quickly fell out of fashion after the Wall Street Crash in 1929, but it did not disappear entirely. The decline in consumption hindered the use of cosmetics and fashion as a means to subvert class and to declare independence. During the Great Depression people did not tolerate lifestyles based on consumerism although the Modern Girl's legacy and desire for freedom and agency survived. Swing jazz, for instance, served as a vehicle for flapper autonomy continued through the Great Depression. Another example would include the fashionable and affluent society members of the 1930s who sought similar liberties.⁵ The flapper as a class disrupting phenomenon was a child of prosperity who could have only occurred during a time when wages were increasing for most workers, and could not survive once the market crashed.⁶ Flappers during the 1920s, sought to establish their own life through

⁴ Most claims in these periodicals were supported by additional evidence, predominately the *New York Times*. So while this approach cannot validate what everyday flappers believed, it does show that these concepts were widespread and allows for a more fruitful and accurate analysis.

⁵ Zeitz, *Flappers*, 255-256.

⁶ Yellis, "Prosperity's Child," 64.

their use of fashion and by controlling how their body was displayed and where, in manners that were taboo and unthinkable in the previous generation.

Further research can access the breadth of the influence that publishers such as *The Flapper* had on American society. In addition, one might seek out other magazines similar to *The Flapper* in North America that catered to a similar audience. This seems possible because the 1920s was a highpoint in magazine production and consumption. *The Shanghai Herald*, an English-language newspaper in China could be a good start. The magazines *Gráfico* and *La Crónica* addressed civil rights and women's rights issues in Latin America, could offer other possibilities. *Gráfico* was published by an artists' collective and edited by Afro-Cuban black-face performer Alberto O'Farrill in Spanish Harlem. It largely served the Puerto Rican population around greater New York, but had some readership in the upper parts of Latin America.⁷ *La Crónica* was published in Laredo Texas and sought to give Mexican Americans and Mexican nationals living within the U.S. a voice for civil rights and to fight segregation. *La Crónica* was also heavily active in the founding of *Liga Femenil Mexicana* (League of Mexican Women).⁸ Local papers could be further analyzed. Specifically letters written to the paper could be explored not only to verify its circulation, but also to substantiate if and how flappers were fighting the system in search of identity and autonomy. Similar searches could be done in East Asia or other geographical locations such as Latin America.

Race and the modern girl could also be further investigated. The question remains, did the Modern Girl subculture accept "others" openly, or just with tepid toleration? This question needs to be explored further because, if minorities were accepted at this time, this would be additional evidence of Modern Girl modernity. It may be possible that the mask of the Modern Girl produced an individual sense of personhood that manifested and culminated in respect for the marginalized as humans with intrinsic value. Articles from *The Flapper* give credence to this claim. Insights could be gleaned from the study of the Harlem Renaissance which had profound influence on the larger culture and included whites who clamored to Harlem to participate in the widespread interest in black culture. Not only did this interest

⁷ Martha Patterson, *The American New Woman Revisited*, 124-125.

⁸ Martha Patterson, *The American New Woman Revisited*, 188.

tower over New York City's musical and cultural scenes, it quickly spread to other cities such as Chicago and lasted throughout the Depression. Did other such phenomena exist in Japan or China, giving credence to scholars who argue that both countries were not as monolithic culturally and ethnically as sometimes assumed or asserted by the dominant culture as is the case with Japan. Images and popular magazine accounts could be further deconstructed in a similar manner, which could potentially give new insights into previously used primary resources. This could enhance the general understanding of the Jazz Age throughout the world as well as how modernity functions in various cultural settings.

It should be noted that this thesis does not completely dispel or dismiss the traditional view that culture comes from the top down, but serves to complicate this common belief. Essentially, we must approach cultural consumption as evidenced in this thesis as something more significant than a tool to maintain social control. It must include agency. This argument also does not require a bottom up view of cultural dissemination. What these and the other examples showed was that culture develops with influences not only from the top down and the down up, but also laterally among the middle-class and the more prominent members of the lower class. This manner of cultural diffusion complements the modernity model of Johannes Fabian which states that modernity was both lateral across nations and relatively simultaneous. Therefore it serves as excellent contextual framework for both modernity and for cultural developments that occur relatively concurrent around the globe.⁹

During the "Jazz Age," mass consumption became a transnational phenomenon. The expansion of commercialization allowed subcultures to develop based on robust consumption. The Modern Girl may be the embodiment of these subgroups, and their consumption allowed the Modern Girl to have empowerment and freedom through a sense of self-fashion and public display. Understanding the Modern Girl and her use of consumption allows historians to understand how consumption developed in the modern sense. This was the main reason why Joshua Zeitz argued that flappers were the first modern Americans, which then justifies entitling the Modern Girl as the first modern world citizens.¹⁰ Although this form of transnational

⁹ Alys Eve Weinbaum, et al. "The Modern Girl as Heuristic Device," 4.

¹⁰ Zeitz, *Flappers*, 291.

gender-based capitalism might not seem to demonstrate agency in a traditional sense, consumption provided a means for working-class women to blur class distinctions and demonstrate upward mobility. In another way, the Modern Girl was the living, breathing, walking, and dancing embodiment of feminism in action. Thus, the Modern Girl fought against gender-based societal beliefs regarding women in public spaces, much as the New Woman. Both were fighting the same battle, but in different arenas and with different implements of combat.



Figure 1: This image, being the first the one seen when opening the pages, sets the pace and style of the magazine.

“Table of Contents,” *The Flapper*, January 1923.



Figure 2: Flappers as political militant engaging in public discourse with the KKK.

The Flapper, March, 1923.

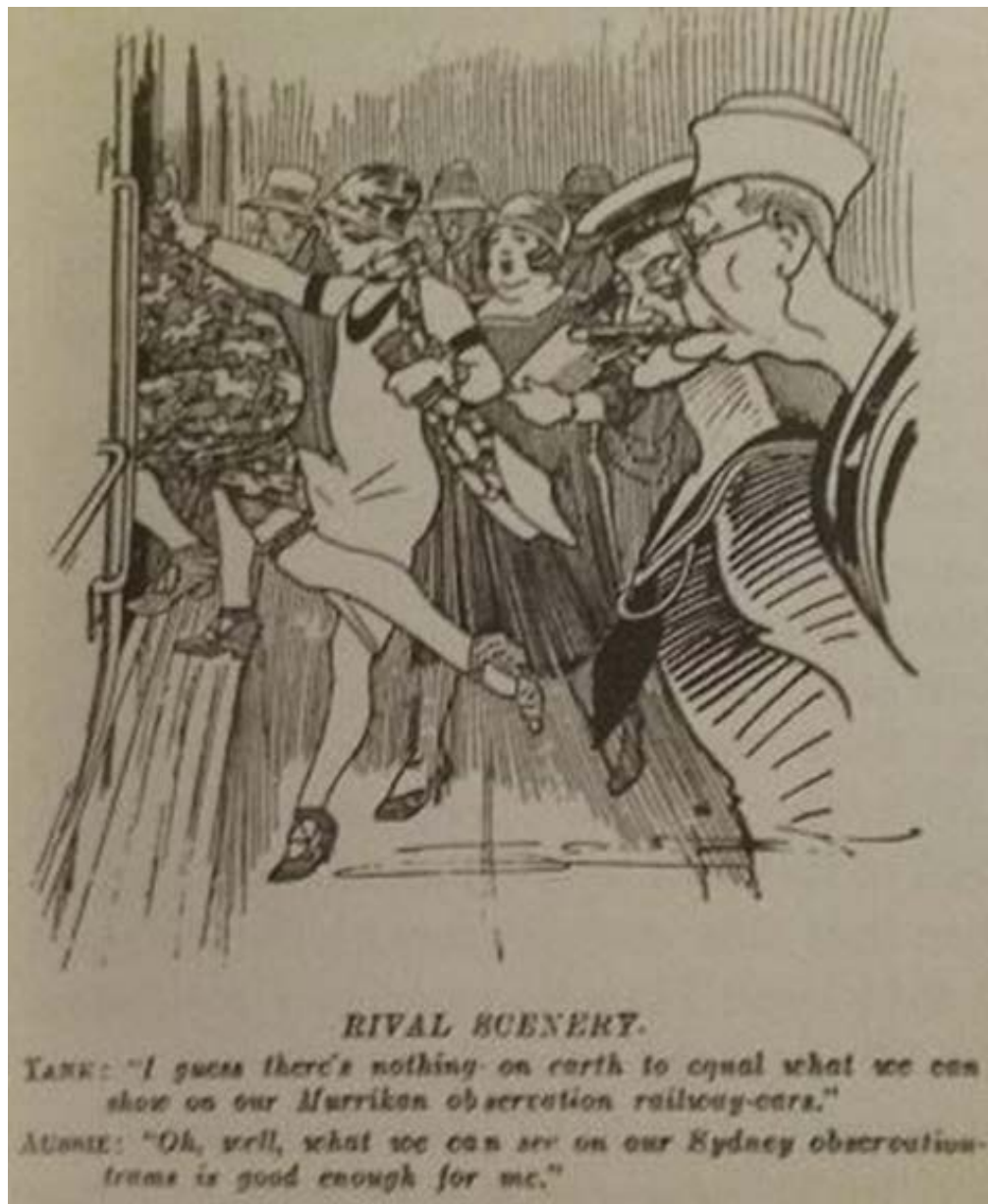


Figure 3: Australian flappers with gawking sailors.
 "Rival Scenery," *Bulletin*, July, 30, 1925.¹

¹ Conor, *The Spectacular Modern Woman*, 61.



Figure 4: Japanese men on a train full of *mogas*, showing the power of allure.

“Brutal torture . . . A shy young man stepped on the trolley bus,”

Guo Jianying. *Jianying manhua ji*, 1934.²

² Madeleine Dong, “Who is Afraid of the Chinese Modern Girl?” in *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization* ed. Alys Eve Weinbaum et al. (Durham: NC, Duke University Press, 2008), 213.



Figure 5: Australian Flapper with Asian characteristics in a soda shop.
“The Flapper’s Wild Oats,” *Aussie*, July, 14, 1923.³

³ Conor, *The Spectacular Modern Woman*, 239 .



Figure 6: Japanese cartoon shows the voyeuristic opportunities available with cameras.

“The photographer thinks that these are his best lenses,”

Lu Shaofei. *Manhua daguan*, 1931.⁴

⁴ Dong, “Who is Afraid of the Chinese Modern Girl?,” 209.



Figure 7: Select covers from Japanese magazine, *Shiseido Graph*.

Images clearly show *Moga*'s performing numerous activities in the public sphere.⁵

⁵ Gennifer Weisenfeld, "Cosmopolitan Glamour" in *Selling Shiseido: Cosmetics Advertising & Design in Early 20th-Century Japan* MIT OpenCourseWare, 8, accessed February 19, 2016, 13.
http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/shiseido_01/sh_essay01.html

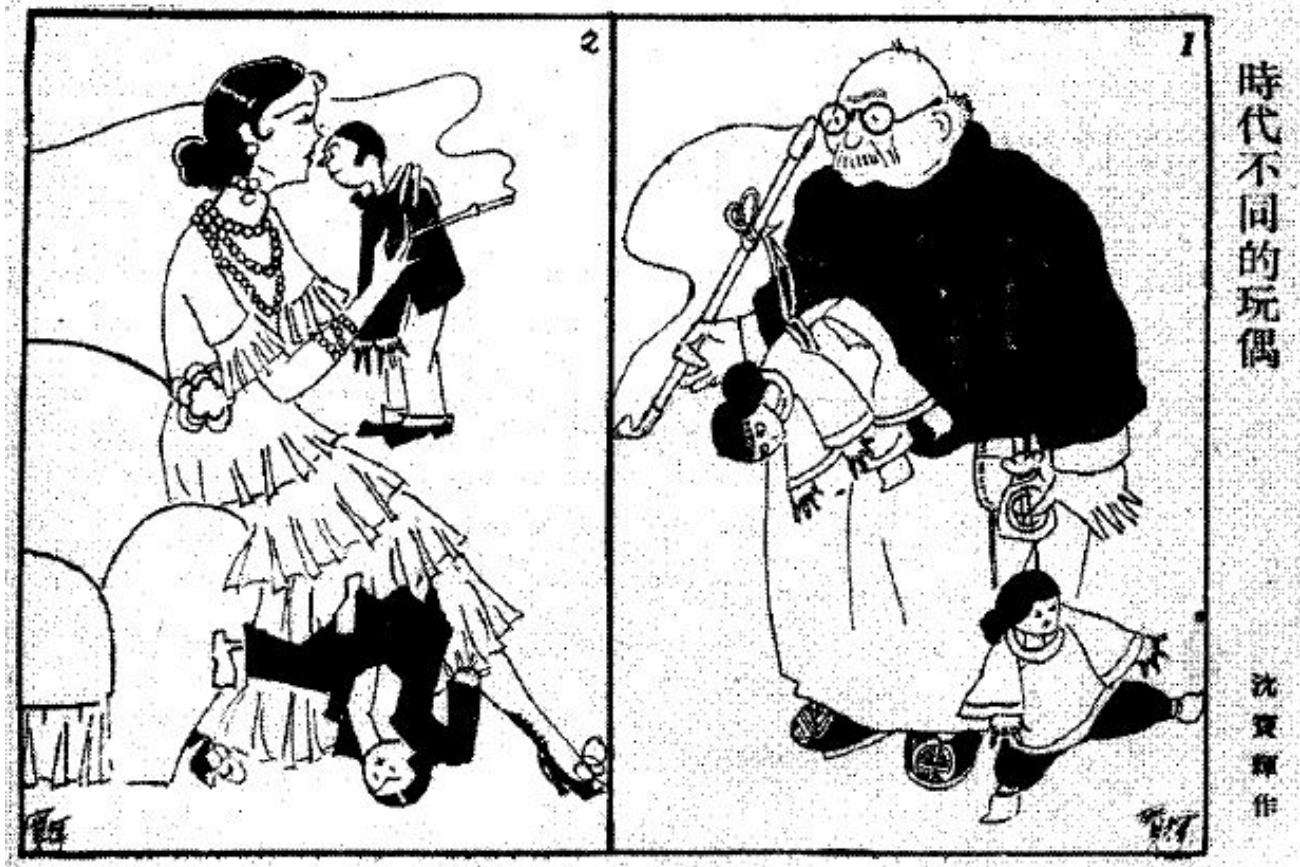


Figure 8: Cartoon depicting the changing roles of women as sexual beings.
 “Playthings of different times,” Shen Baohui. *Manhua daguan*, 1931.⁶

⁶ Dong, “Who is Afraid of the Chinese Modern Girl?,” 209.



Figure 9: The actress Liang Sai Zhen wearing a qipao on the cover of *Ling Long*.
Ling Long v. 7, issue 249 (1936), page 2361.⁷

⁷ "Ling long. Vol. 6, issue 249 (1936), page 2361," Columbia University Libraries Online Exhibitions, accessed April 19, 2016, <https://exhibitions.cul.columbia.edu/exhibits/show/linglong/item/9334>



Figure 10: *Modeng Xiaojie* wearing qipaos and western attire. A clear cosmopolitan message. Caption reads: "Spring is the best season for dressing up. If an overcoat is too warm for going out to a park, you'd better take a short one along to put on casually over a qipao."⁸
Ling Long v.2, issue 50 (1932), p.2063.

⁸ "Ling long. Vol. 2, issue 50 (1932), page 2063," *Columbia University Libraries Online Exhibitions*, accessed April 19, 2016, <https://exhibitions.cul.columbia.edu/exhibits/show/linglong/item/9366>.



Figure 11: Violet Doreen performing her snake dance. Image shows an interest in the exotic.
Flapper's Experience, April 1925.



Figure 12: A picture of Valentine Churchill dressed in Indian attire.
Else E. Brocker, "How to Become a Hindu Dancer Ask
Little Valentine Churchill," *Experience*, January 1924.



Figure 13: Japanese *moga* with a western parasol.
The Flapper, November 1922 .



**Konosan plays with her handsome doll just like
the American flappers.**

Figure 14: Japanese moga in kimono, posing for American flapper magazine.
Flapper's Experience, August 1926.



Figure 15: Niala Khayatt, a politically active Egyptian Flapper.
New York Times, June 17, 1928.



Figure 16: Anna Mae Wong, the epitome of the Chinese American flapper, challenging the perception that flappers needed to be white.⁹

⁹ Zeitz, *Flapper*, 258.

Mandel Brothers
Kimono shop, third floor

Featuring a late, direct importation of

Jap. hand emb'd kimonos

Our representative in the orient secured them at an unusual concession—a fact that explains our ability to quote them at pronounced savings. These representative styles are shown in the illustration below. Two interesting groups:



At 1.68—
Multi-colored kimonos emb'd in wistaria designs; or with white emb'd in butterfly or rose designs. Japanese or American sleeves.

At 1.48—
Kimonos in a variety of shades embroidered in multi-colors; various designs, some with dragon; Japanese sleeves and sash.

Figure 17: Kimono Advertisement from Chicago in 1918
Chicago Daily News, November 11, 1918.



Figure 18: American women wearing kimonos.
Scandinavian Women's Gymnastics Club. Worcester, MA.
Worcester Evening Post, May 2, 1923.

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